THESIS TITLE: Students’, Faculty, and Staff Members’ Perceptions of School Safety in a Middle School Setting

AUTHOR: Samantha Stuart-Sayres

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE:

THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION.

Delores B. Lindsey, Ph.D.  
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR  
SIGNATURE  
DATE

Sabrina Duran  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER  
SIGNATURE  
DATE
Students', Faculty, and Staff Members' Perceptions of School Safety in a Middle School Setting

Samantha Stuart-Sayres

California State University San Marcos
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS ABSTRACT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preview of Literature</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions/Hypothesis</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence in Schools</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying in Schools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft and Vandalism in Schools</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons in Schools</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs and Drug Use among Students</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention and Intervention</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# SCHOOL SAFETY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/Instruments</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Presentation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Data</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff Data</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarization of Findings</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretations of Findings</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings in Context</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility/Limitation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications/Future Direction</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Study</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

School safety is an extremely important issue of great concern to educational administrators nationwide. This study analyzed the demographics and responses of students, faculty, and staff members of one middle school in southern California as well as their exposure to school safety issues (i.e., weapons, drugs, theft, vandalism, and bullying) to determine which variables create a negative perception of school safety. The survey data showed that while the majority of faculty and staff members feel safe at school, some students do not feel safe. Of those students who felt unsafe at school, weapons, drugs, and bullying appeared to be contributing factors to their heightened feeling of insecurity. Although this study did not determine exact causes of students feeling unsafe, the findings in this study serve as an initial point for future research in perceptions and actual issues concerning school safety. Based on the implications from the findings, several recommendations to increase a positive perception of school safety are presented.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the victims of school violence and bullying. It is their stories and the stories of their families that me to create this study and see it through to fruition. It is my hope that this research will continue to add to the body of knowledge on school safety, so that we can resolve this ever-changing problem in education.
Acknowledgements

Thank you Dr. Delores Lindsey, my faculty advisor, for your assistance in keeping me focused on my goals and always being there when I needed you.

To my husband Bryan, thank you for giving me the space, love, and support I needed to get my work completed.

To Kathy Stuart, my mother and remarkable editor, thank you for everything. I will never be able to repay all the encouragement and help that you have given me.

To Jim Stuart, my father and rock, thank you for listening to my frustrations, and providing me with unlimited verbal support.

To Kelly Carr, my school buddy and confidant, thank you for staying by my side through our admin program. I cannot have imagined doing it without you.

To Christina Wiley, my lifelong friend and contributor of time and energy. Thank you for helping compile all my data. Your assistance with this study was invaluable.

To Sabrina Duran, an awesome 4th grade teacher, friend, and committee member, thank you for editing and being so giving of your time.
Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

The school environment in which students are learning is changing day by day. School safety is a national and universal topic of concern in schools and in the media. Students and teachers are witnesses to fighting, drug use, weapons, vandalism, theft, and bullying, which can affect both their safety and their perception of the safety of their school environment. With the addition of anxiety about their safety at school, their concerns and apprehensions can compound exponentially, and their grades can suffer. The same holds true for teachers. A teacher’s job is to educate today’s youth to the best of his/her ability. However, when instruction takes place in an unsafe school environment or classroom atmosphere, personal safety takes precedence over academics. “It is the responsibility of California’s schools to provide an effective, optimal learning environment for each child to attain the highest academic success possible. A fundamental component of this responsibility is the safety and security of the school, its students, and its employees” (Mission Statement, California State Assembly Select Committee on School Safety, 2001). A positive, safe school environment is one of the most essential ingredients in supporting teachers and learners.

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of students and staff in one southern California middle school and discover which indicator(s) may influence those perceptions. The indicators identified in this study coupled with best
practices for safe and orderly schools revealed in current research literature provide a pathway for schools to address the ongoing concerns of school safety.

Preview of Literature

School safety has become a major concern for schools and the public since the media placed its eye squarely on the issue of school shootings, bullying, theft, and drug use in schools during the last decade. "When we think of school violence, we usually think of those incidents that are covered in the media. School murders by students are the most notorious and are attended to by the media in a way that rivets public attention" (Barbanel, 2005, p.vii). Even though school shootings are the most prevalent school safety issue in the media, many other diverse subtopics exist under the general topic of school safety. These subtopics need to be carefully examined. Although primary and secondary schools appear to show an increase in violent issues, middle schools seem to carry the prevalence of the school violence incidents. "During the 2007-08 school year, the rate of violent incidents per 1,000 students was higher in middle schools (41 incidents) that in primary schools (26 incidents) or high schools (22 incidents)" (Neiman, DeVoe, & Chandler, 2009, p.3). Investigation into why middle schools contain a much higher rate of violent incidences is required. The literature reviewed for this study investigated the prevalence of school safety issues. The researcher examined the data for trends or patterns to help identify factors contributing to a significant increase in the rate of violence, and how those data transfer into the students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety.
Running head: SCHOOL SAFETY

Statement of the Problem

Schools today are impacted with issues of physical violence, weapons, drug use, vandalism, theft, and bullying which can all affect the safety of students and teachers on campus. Without more precise knowledge of what students are truly exposed to and feeling, administrators are unable to provide specific interventions to deal with these problems. When students perceive that their learning environment is unsafe, they miss school, change their classroom behavior, or even perform lower on tests. The total effects of what school safety issues such as violence, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying can have on a student’s perception of school safety is still unknown.

This study investigated whether the amount of violence, weapons, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying that students experience effects their perceptions of school safety. School administrators need to understand their students’ feelings about school safety to provide proper interventions, counseling, and enhanced security for students and faculty who feel unsafe at school. Acquiring knowledge of which areas on a campus make students feel unsafe and uncomfortable is important to site administrators as they organize and implement security and safety measures on campus. The Safe Place to Learn Act, created under California Education Code 234 states that, “it is the policy of the state to improve pupil safety at schools and the connections between pupils and supportive adults, schools, and communities” (California State Ed Code Online). This study examined if any areas of the participating middle school required improvement to enhance school safety.
While student safety was the main emphasis of this study, the researcher also investigated perceptions of safety by the faculty and staff. When teachers are exposed to fighting in the classroom or on campus, vandalism of school property or students bringing drugs and weapons on campus, their view of the workplace safety may be affected. Faculty members and other adults on campus have an equal right with students to feel that their work environment is a safe place for them to perform their jobs to the fullest extent. However, administrators must strike an appropriate balance between safety and policing the youth and adults on the school campus. This study attempted to determine if the middle school used for the research was maintaining this balance or if further actions were required to improve school safety.

**Purpose of Study**

Teachers and administrators must understand threat issues that can impact the quality of instruction as well as student achievement. Understanding what students and teachers encounter on a daily basis, and knowing what is happening in the school environment are key pieces of information for school leaders. Issues dealing with school safety are necessary knowledge to help provide the type of environment conducive to quality teaching and learning. The foundation of this study was to help provide students with a safer and more comfortable learning environment through research of key factors that impact students’ and teachers’ perceptions of school safety. Students and teachers have the right to teach and learn in an environment where they feel their lives and personal belongings are safe from harm. Another important aspect of the study was to examine any differences between students’ and
teachers’ perceptions when considering gender, age, and ethnicity as other variables that may influence perceptions of school safety. If a particular demographic of students or teachers has a distinctly negative view of school safety, then it is imperative for the school’s administration to determine which factors are creating that negative perspective and seek solutions to address those concerns.

**Research Questions/Hypothesis**

Research questions were crafted to seek a relationship between students’ and teachers’ exposure to different issues concerning school safety and their perceptions of safety at a specific middle school setting. Concurrently, an investigation of whether gender, age, and ethnicity are factors in students’ and teacher’s perceptions was also implemented. The research questions for this study were:

- Do students’ perceptions of school safety change significantly when they are exposed to (a) fighting; (b) weapons; (c) drugs; (d) vandalism; (e) theft; and (f) bullying on campus?
- Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between genders?
- Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between ages?
- Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between ethnicities?
- Do teacher and staff members’ perceptions of school safety closely correlate to those of the students?

These questions guided the investigation of different issues that can alter perceptions of school safety. Determining a correlation between the students’ and teachers’ perceptions helped define where actual threats to school safety exist.
Perception and actuality often differ, but where they align, important information can be uncovered.

When students and teachers are exposed to fighting, weapons, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying, does it alter their view of personal safety at school negatively? Inability to perform routine schoolwork and teaching may occur when anxiety concerning personal safety becomes an internal threat. Students', staff, and faculty members' perceptions of school safety will likely differ, since students are exposed to different degrees of bullying, fighting, drugs, and theft, than the teachers at the school campus. Teachers are physically limited to the classroom for the majority of the school day, whereas the students matriculate throughout the school campus daily, which can also significantly impact their perceptions of safety. Students' perceptions will also be different since many of these middle school students are coming of age and being exposed to issues for the first time, which can create a sense of fear or anxiety.

**Definition of Terms**

Several terms required definition prior to administration of the survey and analysis of the data. Many of the terms used in the questions within the survey needed clarity, so that the participants fully understand what they are being asked.

* Violence. In an educational setting violence refers to any intentional actions that (a) disrupts the operation of a school’s learning program, (b) cause physical harm or psychological distress for students, teacher and other members of the school staff, *
and/or (c) destroy property. Violent behavior can occur within the school, on the
school grounds, or near the school” (Thomas, 2006, p.5).

**Weapons.** Weapons can be considered any object that is used to inflict pain
upon another. In the educational environment, weapons can be considered a variety
of different items. Guns and knives are considered to be the traditional weapons in
the confines of the public. In a school setting items such as pencils, scissors, pins,
backpacks, physical education equipment (such as bats, field hockey sticks, etc.)
could all be regarded as weapons.

**Fighting.** Fighting is a term that can carry multiple meanings, and needed
clarification on the survey and within the study. Fighting may involve groups or
individuals engaging in physical struggle to inflict harm on one another. At the same
time, fighting does not have to consist of physical violence. Fighting may also be the
verbal altercation between groups and individuals.

**Bullying.** There are three types of bullying which need to be explained within
the confines of the study. The first type of bullying is physical bullying. This is
where an individual or group of students uses their physical ability to intimidate or
injure another. The second type of bullying is verbal bullying. Verbal bullying
occurs when individuals use put-downs or start rumors to affect another’s self-esteem.
The last form of bullying is called exclusion bullying. Students or others who
deliberately prohibit another from interacting, playing, or working with them are
enacting exclusion bullying.


Running head: SCHOOL SAFETY

*Vandalism.* In terms of this study, vandalism will be defined as "the malicious destruction, injury, or disfigurement of any public or private property without the consent of the persons who owns or legally controls the property" (Thomas, 2006, p.11). Vandalism is a frequent occurrence on many school campuses, and is usually visible on desks, walls, backpacks, bathroom walls and other school property. Normal forms of school vandalism are profanity, gang tagging, and obscene pictures.

*Theft.* Theft is defined as taking someone’s personal property. In terms of this study, theft is also deemed the unlawfully taking of property that belongs to the school or the district, as well as an individual’s personal property.

**Summary**

School safety will always be a concern for educational leaders because safety is always a concern for parents and their youth. Making students and staff feel safe is one of the key elements in creating an environment where students can thrive and teachers and staff can perform at their best. The main problem with understanding school safety is that there are so many aspects to it, and there are many characteristics of it that can go unnoticed by the administration. Administrators struggle to determine which factors present the most prevalent concerns for school safety without first understanding the perceptions of students and teachers and how much actual exposure they have had to violence, weapons, drug use, theft/vandalism, and bullying on campus. Safety and security measures are put into place based on what is seen on campus, and not necessarily by what is felt. In order to create an environment where
students and staff feel the safest, school leaders must first look at all the indicators that cause a negative sense of school safety. Leaders then must devise a solution to the problem. This study identifies correlations that existed between exposure to safety issues, gender, age (or age group), and their personal perception of how safe they feel on campus.

Every school has its own approach to security and safety on school campuses. “Larger, national studies are needed to determine the degree and types of school security that exist and to examine if safety measures are practiced consistently across community settings in all geographic regions of the United States” (Shelton, Owens, & Song, 2009, p.25). It is apparent that further research on school safety is necessary, and this study intended to add to that body of knowledge. This study offers administrators insight into what actions can be taken to improve school safety in a specific middle school setting. Chapter two provides background research of the issues and statistical data concerning school violence and safety. Chapter three details the methodology used for the study. Chapter four provides the analyses of data, and chapter five provides recommendations on which to build an action plan to improve perceptions of safety on campus.
Chapter II

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a correlation between exposure to violence, drugs, weapons, bullying, and theft and the perceptions of school safety by students, teachers, and faculty at a middle school. School safety is a prevalent concern in education that continues to obstruct student’s learning in the classroom and demands significant time of administrators. The biggest obstacle concerning school safety is that there are various topics that fall into this category. Violence/fighting, weapons, drug use, vandalism, theft, and bullying appear to be the most noteworthy topics under the heading of school safety. The purpose of this chapter is to deconstruct each of these topics using prior research to see how they are currently effecting educational environments. Furthermore, this chapter surveys research conducted regarding students’ or teachers’ perceptions on any of the related school safety topics and how these topics related to their perceptions of school safety.

Violence in Schools

There are different variations of violence and victimization at schools for consideration. Violence can range from the severe issue of deaths (which includes homicides or suicides of students), to somewhat milder issues like theft or name-calling. All types of violence are a serious threat to the educational environment, especially the death of a student. A recent study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education provided statistical data on all areas of school violence from the 2006-2008 school years. “From July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2007, there were 27
homicides and 8 suicides of school-age youth (ages 5-18) at school, or about 1
homicide or suicide per 1.6 million students enrolled during the 2006-07 school year”
(Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, & Snyder, 2009, p.v). When a student commits homicide or
suicide on campus it can affect a whole school. Teachers, students, and staff can
require a significant amount of time to bounce back from the traumatic experience,
and it can considerably deteriorate their view of school safety. When it is documented
by the media, it can take the situation to a heightened level of exposure. It is most
difficult for administrators to decide how to handle the issue of a student committing
suicide or homicide on campus, and determine what consequences might proceed
after the violence has occurred. It is equally as difficult to decide what interventions
to provide for students and teachers affected by the situation. Administrators
normally do their best to provide counseling for students and teachers, but sometimes
it may not be enough to repair the damage that has been done to the climate of the
school.

In addition, it was important to determine if males and females were subject to
the same types of victimization and violence. Current research using the “Healthy
Families Survey” used a sample size of 182,153 7th, 9th, and 11th graders in California,
and indicated that males and females are prone to different types of victimization.

“Overall, our results show that more than one half of students reported at least
one experience of victimization at school in the past 12 months, with the most
common being behaviors associated with sexual harassment, relational
victimization, and teasing. Consistent with prior research, female students
were most likely to experience behaviors consistent with sexual harassment or relational aggression, whereas male students were more likely to experience physical victimization” (Felix, Furlong, & Austin, 2009, p 1688).

In association with this data, numerous research studies on school violence indicate that twice as many male students report being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property (Dinkes et. al, 2009, p. 46) (Kuntsche, E. & Klingemann, H., 2004, p. 382). This correlates to the previous information that males experience more physical victimization. The Department of Education’s nationwide survey indicates that “44 percent of males said they had been in a fight anywhere, compared to 27 percent of females, and 16 percent of males said they had been in a fight on school property, compared to 9 percent of females” (Dinkes et. al, 2009, p. vii). Fighting leads to suspensions and expulsions in schools, this can lead to less quality student learning and a negative perception of school safety by those witnessing the fight or involved within it. Females on the other hand are more victims of verbal victimization. Verbal victimization is considered name-calling, rumor spreading, or being sexually harassed by the opposite or same sex, all of which are a form of bullying. The effects of students being consistently teased or sexually harassed can create internal anxiety, causing them to miss or skip classes and perform inconsistently on school work. “For perceptions of school safety and feelings of depression, all victimization groups fared worse that students who reported no or very low levels of victimization” (Felix et. al., 2009, p.1683). This was especially important to the research within this study since
it is determining the correlation between exposure to violence and victimization and how this relates to students’ perceptions of school safety.

Equally important in the investigation of school violence is the use of hostility, violence, or threats against teachers. “In city schools, 10 percent of teachers were threatened with injury by students, compared to 6 percent of teachers in suburban schools, 5 percent of teachers in town schools, and 5 percent of teachers in rural schools” (Dinkes et. al, 2009, p.v). When a teacher is threatened with violence by a student, it can significantly impact their ability to instruct. If the incidence occurs within the classroom, it can undermine their discipline regimen, and force them to completely reevaluate their classroom management. In addition, it can create a sense of fear associated with their workplace, which can lead to job dissatisfaction.

Historically teachers used to handle student misbehaviors in the classroom with corporal punishment. Corporal punishment was a consistent practice nationwide where teachers and principals would inflict pain upon a student as penalty for misbehavior or disrespect in the classroom. Corporal punishment is now considered a very extreme form of discipline, and is no longer seen as an effective tool to gain classroom management, and for good reason; it is considered by many as a form a child abuse (Denmark, Krauss, Wesner, Midlarsky, & Gielen, 2005, p. 46). The current course of action in many schools for violence towards teachers is to suspend or expel a student from schools and remove them from that teacher’s classroom, as part of a no tolerance regimen of discipline. This course of action is helpful but also
only serves as a temporary solution of the problem. Proper training of teachers on how to deal with these sorts of threats and violence toward them is necessary. Providing students with counseling prior to violent incidences needs to be assessed and implemented by education professionals in order to try and stop the problem from occurring or recurring. Teachers need to feel like they are prepared to handle serious safety issues in the classroom, and have a course of action to take when severe problems (i.e., student carrying a weapon, drug use or fighting in the classroom) arise.

Bullying at Schools

Bullying is one of those problems that effect more students than estimated. “More than two million school children in the United States are involved in bullying—either as victims or as bullies—according to a study released in April 2001 by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development” (Hillsburg & Spak, 2006, p.24). Bullying incidences have risen immensely in the last few decades, and administrators spend more time dealing with disciplinary issues concerning bullying then they would like to admit. In order to discourage bullying in schools, administrators first need to look at understanding the underlying causes and root of the behavior. Most of the current research and studies taking place aim their sights on determining those factors. Data from those studies indicate that bullying tends to peak in late childhood/early adolescence, which can make prevention and intervention efforts in late elementary school and middle school crucial (Milsom & Gallo, 2006, p. 12). If an age group is targeted as the origin of bullying, then the prevention needs to begin even earlier. Students, who show indicators of being a
bully or victim, need to be brought to the attention of administration and counselors so that prevention can take place before it manifests into further problems. Criminal behavior, school dropout rates, poor psychological adjustment, and other problems with long-term negative effects on society are also associated with bullying (Rowan, 2007, p.182). It is plain to see that bullying is not going to go away by itself, and if the problem continues to be pushed to the side, then it will only continue to get worse. A solution, not simply a “band-aid” needs to be found that will result in positive outcomes for students, teachers, and schools.

There are several indicators of bullying which need to be accessible to teachers to generate their awareness of students at-risk. Victims of bullying tend to be easily identified, because their behavior is overt. There are many indicators which present themselves in the classroom, which teachers and administrators can use to identify students as victims of bullying. Some of these indicators include: A child’s grades begin to fall. A child shows a decrease in interest for school in general. A child feigns illness, such as frequent headaches or stomach aches. A child chooses ubiquitous routes home. A child claims to have lost books, money, or other belongings without a good explanation. A child has unexplained injuries, bruises, or torn clothing (Scarpaci, 2006, p.172).

All of these indicators are measurable by a teacher or administrator, and should be documented properly to ensure the student’s well-being is not compromised on a school’s campus. Documentation serves as a vital role in obtaining help for a student who is possibly being victimized. Without it, proper interventions cannot be utilized
and the student continues to be harassed by bullies, and struggle internally with the problem. Any significant change in a student’s behavior needs to be noted and examined to ensure that there are no serious issues that require attention.

One of the most significant issues in bullying relates to the prevalence of victims becoming bullies themselves. It has been uncovered that many students who are persecuted by years of bullying have a significantly high tendency to turn into bullies themselves.

Though one might not think of a student who attacks others as a victim, that is sometimes the case. Bullies are characterized by hypersensitivity toward criticism—being teased, harassed, or generally picked on by those to whom they were violent (Scarpaci, 2006, pg.173).

Early intervention with students who present indicators of victimization is essential. Making the difference with a student while they are a victim, before they manifest into a bully could make all the difference. None of this can happen without teachers and administrators being aware of the indicators.

Identifying bullies can be a much more complicated task. “Common characteristics of bullies include antisocial behavior, strong self-esteem, an inability to feel empathy, and a need to feel power and control” (Rowan, 2007, p.182). While some of these characteristics are observably evident like those of victims, others are extremely difficult to monitor, and make the task of identifying bullies very complicated.
For teachers and administrators, addressing the indicators of bullies which are observable is extremely important. "...bullies were described as individuals who do not follow rules, get into physical fights, and pick on others" (Onder & Yurtal, 2008, p.822). Students who fit these characteristics can normally be found in a detention seat, in the principal’s office receiving a suspension, or terrorizing students in a classroom. They are identified by actions which persecute other students with name calling, violence, and disrespect of authority figures. Common consequences may not prove enough to alter their behavior and make a significant impact. However, these students can be identified, which allows administrators and teachers to seek alternative ways in handling the behavior.

While some behaviors bullies employ are easily observable, others are more covert and much more difficult to discover without digging deeper into the background and psyche of a student.

While the stereotype is that bullies have low self-esteem, actually they’re often self-confident, popular, and make friends easily. If slighted however, they may take it out on someone who can’t fight back. The reasons for this are based somewhere in familiar coping mechanisms that bullies have learned (Scarpaci, 2006, p.173).

It is much harder to monitor incidences of bullying if the individual has clout and popularity at school. Having friends who will corroborate their lies that ‘nothing happened’ to an administrator or teacher who is following up on another student’s accusations of harassment, makes giving consequences a harder task. In addition,
much of the bullying that takes place at schools happens on an emotional level. When boys and girls exclude someone from playing with their group of friends, it is a form of harassment which can be considered a gray area when deciding if consequences should be given, even though a student is effected emotionally by these actions. Even more disconcerting is when a student is bullied on the way home from school. It remains a difficult task for administrators and school staff to ensure the safety of students to and from school.

**Theft and Vandalism in Schools**

Theft and vandalism can be just as painful to students and staff as an act of violence, because a person can feel victimized when their personal property is stolen or damaged. People become extremely attached to their personal belongings and react illogically when it is destroyed or stolen. It has been difficult for researchers to find a cause as to why students turn to theft and vandalism. Some researchers have tried to connect school climate as a major contributor to theft and vandalism. "It was found that when school climate was not positive and did not enhance students' social welfare, the rate of vandalism was high, and when the school did not effectively promote learning, vandalism tended to increase" (Horowitz & Tobaly, 2003, p. 132). When students do not have a positive view of their learning environment or a sense of belonging to their school, it is almost understandable that they do not care about the property within it. They tag walls with graffiti, and destroy and steal property because they do not feel like it is a part of who they are.
An additional factor that has been researched as a correlation to students committing theft and vandalism is a student's socioeconomic status or being a foster child. Many students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged or foster children do not have many material things or a home that really feels like their own. When a child feels jealousy or envy towards other students and their belongings, they steal or vandalize others' property to make themselves feel better. Along with socioeconomic status and being a foster student, gender has also played a role in the prevalence of vandalism and theft. "Male students were also more likely than female students to have property stolen or damaged" (Felix, et.al, 2009, p.1688). There is no clear conclusion within the research as to why more males than females steal from other male students, although ideas have been formed. It is believed that males tend to have less fear of consequences of their actions, and less fear when committing the acts, but further research is necessary to determine if these are true causes (Felix et. al., 2009).

When a school, teacher, or student property is damaged, the main concern is how it will affect the learning and perspectives of those involved. "The most damaging consequence of school-property theft is that the loss of items cripples the staff's ability to conduct the educational program. As a result, students' learning opportunities are impaired" (Thomas, 2006, p. 169). When a teacher's ability to educate and students' opportunities to learn are impaired, it seems only obvious that their perception of school safety will then be negatively skewed. It is also important to note that students are not the only ones who commit the crime of theft and
vandalism at a school. “School equipment and services are stolen by various sorts of individuals, including students, students’ family members, school personnel, and outsiders” (Thomas, 2006, p.168). Schools are targets for theft because many of them have inadequate security measures and very expensive equipment that catches the eyes of thieves.

**Weapons in Schools**

With recent media covered incidences over the last decade of students using violence with weapons on campus against teachers, students, and staff, it has become an enormous issue of concern for the public and schools nationwide. Researchers are continuously evaluating the amount of students who are bringing weapons to school, and trying to discover ways to identify why students feel the need to carry weapons on campus. By taking a closer look at students’ ethnicity, socioeconomic status, victimization rates, violent backgrounds, and other risk factors, they are able to gain a greater perspective as to why students feel the need to arm themselves with weapons, and what factors contribute to use of them.

The first step in researching weapons is to determine the actual rate of students who are bringing weapons to school. In a 2008 study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, a subgroup of the U.S. Department of Education found that, “In 2007, 18 percent of students in grade 9-12 reported carrying a weapon anywhere in the past 30 days, while 6 percent reported they had carried a weapon on school property” (Dinkes et.al, 2009, p.46). While the rate of students carrying a weapon on campus is much smaller than that in the public arena, it still
amounts to large group of students. To put it in perspective, in a high school with a population of 1,000 students, an average of 60 of them are carrying a weapon at any given time. This rate is disturbing when considering its effects on student’s perceptions of school safety. Another study conducted in 2003, which used a national survey for its data offered statistics on the rate of middle school students carrying weapons to school, noting that 10% of middle school students are carrying weapons on school campus (Malecki & Damaray, 2003, p.169). This data is even more significant, since the age of the students is younger, yet the prevalence of weapon carrying is higher.

When examining the most current research on the ethnicity of students carrying weapons, there was little discrepancy among different backgrounds. “A smaller percentage of Asian students (8 percent) than students from other racial/ethnic groups reported carrying a weapon anywhere, but no measurable differences were detected among Black students (17 percent), White students (18 percent), and Hispanic students (19 percent)” (Dinkes et.al, 2009, p.46). Asian students appear to be the only ethnic subgroup that carries a significantly less amount of weapons to school. Previous research from 1999 indicated that African-American and Hispanic students were more likely to carry weapons than white students (Malecki et.al, 2003, p.170). There were no indications as to why within the last ten years, weapons carrying may have increase by white students, except possibly an increase of violence in schools as a whole as a contributor. The research from the 2009 Department of Education survey indicated that the percentage of students
carrying weapons across different states in North America varied considerably, with Hawaii being the lowest at 4%, and New Mexico being the highest at 27% (Dinkes et al., 2009, p.46). It is apparent that the issue of students carrying weapons is a nationwide problem; however, the severity of the issue is not consistent throughout.

Another significant aspect about the research on student’s carrying weapons is the cause or reason why students bear them in the first place. One of the key factors in students carrying weapons are discipline problems and aggressive behavior. If the student engages in gang affiliation, is an aggressive bully, or presents severe antisocial behavior, it is highly likely that the student will brandish a weapon on campus for personal security or to establish dominance. Along with antisocial behavior, a history of being victimized in school is a major cause for a student carrying a weapon (Malecki et al., 2003, p.170). Almost all of the school shootings that have occurred within the last decade can be contributed to a student feeling bullied or victimized at school. Students take issues into their own hands, and use weapons to solve their problems when they feel like they are not being heard, or cannot stand up for themselves. Fear is a consistent driving factor for weapon use, especially if the student being victimized goes unidentified and unresolved.

The last major factor noted within the research as a cause of students carrying weapons is access to the weapons, and the students having knowledge of someone older using or carrying a weapon. “Weapon carriers were also more likely to report weapon carrying by an older associate, defined as an acquaintance more than 5 years older” (Kingery, Coggeshall, & Alford, 1999, p.312). When students are around
older siblings, gang members, or older friends that carry weapons, they perceive that it is acceptable to do so, and feel the need to do it themselves. It is a vicious cycle that is hard to stop. How can we keep students from being exposed to weapons outside of school?

**Drugs and Drug Use among Students**

Students using drugs or being offered drugs are extremely daunting concepts. It is one of parents’ greatest fears that their child will experiment with drugs at a young age, and not have the maturity of common sense to just say no when they are offered to them due to peer pressure or curiosity. Although many programs are in place to help students resist the temptations of drugs and alcohol, drugs continue to make their way onto school campuses and students’ lives. “In 2007, 22 percent of all students in grades 9-12 reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property in the past 12 months” (Dinkes et.al, 2009, p.vi). This percentage rate correlates to approximately 1 in every 5 students feeling the pressure to use drugs during the school year.

The main drugs used by students in middle and high schools are cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. A study conducted in Western New York State with 1,123 participating high school students evenly distributed among grade levels from urban and rural schools researched the prevalence of alcohol and marijuana use by students at school. The results of the study showed a shocking rate of substance abuse of students while in school. “Twelve percent of the sample reported using alcohol during school hours during the past six months and sixteen percent reported using
marijuana at school” (Finn, 2006, p.72). When students are using drugs during the school days, it seriously deteriorates their learning process and ability to function in the classroom, and might also be a precursor to problems at home, problems at school, and the possibility that they may engage in violent activities in school.

This study also segregated the data to determine the prevalence of drug and alcohol use by gender and ethnicity, to uncover if any trends were available. “Males reported higher levels of both alcohol (14% of males, 10% of females) and marijuana (19% of males, 14% of females) use at school compared with females. The odds of using alcohol and marijuana at school were 1.54 and 1.49 times greater for males than for female students, respectively” (Finn, 2006, p.73). Almost all studies researched, including this one revealed that males are more likely to use drugs on school campus, a trend that needs further investigation for understanding. Do males have more access to the alcohol and drugs? Do males have less fear of being caught with alcohol and drugs on campus? These questions remain unanswered, and require more research.

When examining the ethnic statistical differences within the study, there were larger discrepancies. There appeared to be a large inconsistency of drug use between Hispanic and Caucasian student alcohol and marijuana use. “Hispanic students had significantly higher levels of alcohol (19%) and marijuana (24%) than did white students (12% and 17% respectively)” (Finn, 2006, p.73). When examining the participants used in this study, only 7% of the study consisted of Hispanic students versus 67% white. The significant amount of drug use by the Hispanic students
this study provides evidence that a serious problem may exist among this ethnic subgroup. When comparing this data against the national survey of students using drugs, the same discrepancies were appearing. Hispanic students were reported to have at least a nine percent higher rate of drug use compared to all other significant ethnic subgroups from 1993 to 2007 (Dinkes, et.al, 2009, p.102). In California, Hispanic students make up a large majority of the student population. This is a statistic to be aware of, especially for middle and high school administration. Further study is required to determine what factors are contributing to Hispanic students having such a higher prevalence of drug and alcohol use.

Another aspect of students’ alcohol and drug use that has been examined through current research is the correlation between school attachment and the occurrence of alcohol use. A study conducted in 2006, of 4,216 middle school students across the United States examined the correlation between a student’s personal level of school attachment and a student’s recent use of alcohol. The study also inspected the possibility of students using alcohol, their beliefs about other students using alcohol, and their attitudes in general about alcohol against their personal level of school attachment. School attachment is defined by the researchers as a feeling of connectedness with the school, where students feel safe to learn, can grow in their interpersonal relationships, and feel safe to express themselves (Henry & Slater, 2007, p.68). Within their research they were able to determine that that more attached a student felt to their school indicated they were less likely to engage in alcohol use.
“...better attached students were less likely to have recently used alcohol.

They also reported lower intentions to use alcohol in the future, perceived that fewer of their peers at school used alcohol, had more desirable attitudes toward alcohol use (i.e., they did not think it was cool to use alcohol), and more strongly held aspirations that were inconsistent with alcohol use” (Henry & Slater, 2007, p.72).

Their research strongly suggests that school climate plays an integral role in student’s willingness to participate in alcohol use, and their perception that others in the school are engaging in the activity. This is significant to the research within this study, since we are examining the correlation between students’ exposure to drugs and alcohol and how it contributes to their perception of school safety. In this study they performed almost the opposite. They investigated how school climate, which school safety is an attribute of, became a factor in how students perceived alcohol use and the possibility of them using alcohol themselves. If a school’s climate is perceived to be positive and students feel connected to their school, it seems they are much less likely to engage in alcohol and possibly other drug use. This is an extremely significant factor for school administrators to examine, especially if their school reports a high use of alcohol or drugs among its students. It is necessary for administrators to determine what factors can be changed about the school to create a better school climate.
Prevention and Intervention

An important aspect of studying school violence is to understand the methods and strategies used by other schools to prevent problem behaviors. Many schools already put into practice different policies and procedures to deal with school violence and aggression. While these methods have been used for years and are deemed satisfactory, they still require further action and other routines to solidify the prevention of violence in schools.

One of the first steps in finding the right treatment is to determine the scope of the problem at the specific school location. "Conducting an analysis of the school’s discipline referrals over a set period of time, by surveying students, staff, parents, and other service providers regarding their perceptions of the problem, and by holding focus groups/interviews with various stakeholders" (Bullock & Fitzsimons, 1996, p.37). A problem cannot be solved without first understanding the severity. Communicating openly about the problems a school has concerning violence will facilitate determining the appropriate treatment. It is imperative to be knowledgeable about which students are involved in the acts of violence, what types of incidents are occurring, and how often they are occurring when devising a plan for intervention. Disciplinary information is frequently entered into a database to maintain documentation, but how often is it analyzed to determine trends and possible problems that may exist?

It is also important to understand the population of the school and how this may relate to the risk of violence. "Urban schools, those in high crime areas, those
with large class sizes, and junior high schools are particularly likely to have problems
with school violence” (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999, p.64). Schools which contain
these characteristics need to be particularly vigilant when monitoring data in order to
avoid further violence.

A study which conducted an assessment of the incidence of aggression
outlined many of the problems that schools face when dealing with problem
behaviors (Bullock & Fitzsimons, 1996, p.37). The first problem that researchers
noticed was that the forms being used to document behavior were too long and
detailed, or lacked the sufficient information to assess the pertinent issues. As a
result, teachers were unable to complete the forms properly. Another commonality in
the research was that a small number of students were normally responsible for the
behaviors. When the same students are committing the same problems continuously,
the system of discipline for those students needs to be reevaluated. Lastly, a major
problem involving school violence was that teachers were ill prepared to deal with
violence in the classroom. Teachers require appropriate training in classroom
management to handle the possibility of serious issues in the classroom and on
campus, and many schools fall short of this necessary training. It is important that
everyone be “on board” with their support to achieve the goal of having a safe school.
Without the proper training, teachers are not “on board” because they are ill-equipped
to handle situations and complete necessary documentation.

Much of the current research being conducted to prevent school violence is
pointing toward a positive approach to change. One of the main key elements of this
positive change mentality is to create a sense of connectedness for the students (Smith & Sandhu, 2004, p.288). Feeling connected means a student feels nurtured, supported, and accepted in their school environment and community. Research suggests that when a student feels connected to their school they are more likely to have greater levels of commitment and better performance in class (Smith & Sandhu, 2004, p.288). Creating a relationship with parents and families of students is essential to having connectedness. Keeping the lines of communication open about classroom performance and behavior is important to establish those relationships. Getting parents to come to meetings and school events to work on prevention together is key to that communication and bond with the school environment. Maintaining a positive classroom and school environment where students feel accepted and equal is also important. Getting students involved in campus activities where positive relationships are built between staff and students can help students to feel accepted and an essential part of their school.

The structure and routine of the school is also noted as being essential in maintaining a safe school environment.

Structure in the classroom and on campus is an important quality of a safe school. Ideally, the school day should include as much structure as possible. An analysis should be conducted of times and places in which students are under less structure and/or experiencing less supervision. During unstructured or less supervised times, plans should be in place to provide additional monitoring of students (Warner, Weist, and Krulak, 1999, p.65).
It is important to know where students are on campus at all times. During times where students are not in the classroom, it is crucial that they all remain in a monitored area to ensure safety. In middle and high schools, it is essential to have security personnel available. Security personnel are trained on how to handle school safety issues, and are becoming an increasing necessity for secondary schools today. The presence of security can aid students in feeling safe in their school environment. By maintaining structure throughout the school, analyzing unstructured times, and having security available during those times, schools can diminish safety issues on campus.

Mediation is another noteworthy strategy for preventing school violence. Mediation helps improve the life skills of students when handling conflict at school (Gorton, Alston, and Snowden, 2007, p. 142). It gives students the skills to communicate about their problems, instead of resolving them with hate-filled words, threats, or violence. Many students in secondary schools lack the necessary conflict resolution skills required to handle situations that arise. School counselors and psychologists can use mediation as a means to bridge the gap between student cliques, students who are fighting, or resolve disagreements between students and teachers. While mediation can be somewhat time consuming, its potential rewards toward creating a safer school are limitless. “Effective leadership requires a knowledge of conflict management that is applicable to a wide variety of situations, including situations that could escalate into violence” (Gorton, et.al, 2007, p. 142).
School leaders need to know the benefits of empowering students with the skill of conflict management.

**Summary**

All areas concerning school safety are important to review and examine for an understanding of the trends in each area during the last decade or two. Violence against students is a rising issue, especially in middle schools, and should be a major priority in education. Student learning is not taking place when a student is suspended for fighting or expelled for bringing a weapon to school. Bullying among students has become a tremendous concern in education. Students are demeaning each other with names and threats, and it impacts a student’s ability to function and focus in the classroom. When school walls are vandalized with graffiti and students and teachers have personal items stolen from them, it creates a less comfortable environment for working and learning. Drugs are ruining the lives of many students who feel the pressure to use in pre-adolescence and adolescence and become addicted. These are all serious issues which are impacting the education of students and the working environment for teachers and staff. Focusing on intervention and prevention can help to create a safer school environment. Examining trends in school violence, creating relationships with the community of the school, and trying new methods are part of being a transformational school leader. Chapter three presents the methodology used in this study to determine which factors contribute to the perception of school safety by students and staff at a middle school.
Chapter III

Methodology

This study was intended to reveal which factors contribute to perceptions of school safety by students, faculty, and staff at a middle school. The occurrence of violence, drug use, weapons, theft/vandalism, and bullying all play a major role in the measurement of school safety. This chapter describes the methodology used in this study to determine how exposure to these different aspects of school safety impacts the perceptions of students, faculty, and staff of the quality of safety in a middle school setting.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected for this study. A middle school in Southern California supplied the setting for this research. Participants were 6th and 8th graders as well as the faculty and staff of the school. Collection of the data for this research was conducted through a comprehensive survey given to students during a single school day and faculty and staff via e-mail. The data were analyzed to determine if a correlation between students' and staffs' exposure to violence, drug use, weapons, theft/vandalism, and bullying alters their perceptions of school and personal safety. This study attempted to discover whether or not students' and staffs' perceptions of school safety are influenced positively or negatively from exposure to these factors (violence, drug use, weapons, theft/vandalism, or bullying). This is necessary information to be able to provide possible interventions or a plan of action that can increase school climate and perceptions of school safety. This chapter
presents the design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis techniques used in the methodology of this study.

Sufficient data and prior research on the presence and prevalence of violence, drug use, weapons, vandalism/theft, and bullying were available; however, an insufficient amount of research on how violent incidents impact the perceptions of students and staff on school safety exists. This study intended to provide insight into which factors contribute to altering the perception that the school is a safe place to teach and learn. This was done so that administrators can design interventions for students and staff who feel negatively about school safety.

Design

The design used within this study is action and correlational research. Correlational research attempts to collect data in order to determine the degree to which a relationship exists between two variables while action research focuses on a specific local problem, resulting in a plan of action to address the problem (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In the terms of this study, the independent variables are the prevalence and observance of (a) violence; (b) drug use; (c) weapons; (d) theft/vandalism; and (e) bullying, and the dependent variable are the perceptions of students and staff of school safety at a specific middle school. To collect the essential data for this study, a comprehensive survey was distributed to 6th and 8th grade students, faculty, and staff at a middle school in Southern California. The survey data were analyzed to determine if there was a correlation between the exposures to above mentioned independent variables and how it related to perceptions of school safety by
the students and staff of the school. The data was also segregated by gender, age, and ethnicity to examine if the data showed any significant trends. Once the data was completely analyzed, an action plan was designed to provide new interventions and ideas to prevent the negative perception of school safety for the specific middle school used in the study.

Participants

Participants for this study consisted of students in 6\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} grade, faculty, and staff from a Title 1 middle school in Southern California. The purpose of using students from 6\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} grade was to examine if there are any differences in perception between different age groups. The student population of the school currently consists of 261 sixth graders and 289 eighth graders, with an ethnicity distribution of 65.2\% Hispanic, 22.5\% African-American, 7.2\% Caucasian, 1.9\% Asian, 2.1\% Filipino, 0.4\% Pacific Islander, and 0.6\% from multiple backgrounds or no response. There are currently 47 full time staff members on campus, which includes teachers, administration, office staff, and security guards. Only full time staff members will be included in the survey since they have the most interaction with students and availability to complete the survey. The school's current API (Academic Performance Index) score is 745. The school is not currently eligible to be under program improvement status because it declines Title I funds from the state, but is in probationary status since it did not meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) in Language Arts for the African-American and English Language Learner subgroups. The school reported 415 suspensions and 1 expulsion in the 2006-07 school year, 348
suspensions and 4 expulsions in the 2007-08 school year, and 292 suspensions and 3 expulsions in the 2008-09 school years. There are currently 2 counselors, 1 school psychologist (50% time), 1 school nurse (20% time), a health technician, and 2 security guards on campus at all times.

Materials/Instruments

There were very few materials required for this research study. The first and most important material for the study was the comprehensive survey. The survey first collected background information about the participants who completed it. It inquired about their age (or age group), gender, and ethnicity. This information was useful later when the data was analyzed to determine if gender, age, or ethnicity played a role in way subgroups of students, faculty, or staff perceived school safety. The survey continued with questions concerning the amount of exposure students, faculty, and staff have had to violence, weapons, drug use, theft/vandalism, and bullying on campus. Students and staff first answered if they have witnessed any violence, drug use, weapons, theft/vandalism, and bullying, and then if it was observed, they indicated the amount they have observed (i.e., 1-5 times, 5-10 times, 10 or more times). This information was pertinent in determining if the amount of exposure to the school safety items was a factor in the perception of the student or staff member. The survey finished with the ultimate question of how they would rate their perception of school safety based on the four categories: (a) I feel very safe at school; (b) I feel safe at school; (c) I sometimes feel unsafe at school; and (d) I feel very unsafe at school.
Other materials required for this study were used in the compilation of data and analysis of results. A computer and educational statistics program were required to assemble and organize all of the data collected from the surveys. Additionally, a colleague with a background in educational statistics was required to assist in data entry and deciphering the correlation between responses. This colleague also assisted in ensuring that all the data was accurately entered into the program.

**Procedures**

During the first stage of the process, the researcher gathered background information on the specific middle school site, which was the setting for conducting the survey. The principal and vice principal of the school assisted in providing demographic information about the school including the ethnic backgrounds of the students, security protocols, suspension and expulsion reports from the previous three years, and also what safety precautions were currently being taken at the school site. Once background information was gathered, permission and consent from the principal and other district personnel was acquired for distribution of the survey to students, faculty, and staff members of the school.

The next stage of the process was to distribute the comprehensive survey consisting of 22 questions, which was given to 6th and 8th grade students during one school day. First, background information about the participants was collected. Then, questions with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers and multiple choice options were asked to determine if any exposure or how much exposure students, faculty, and staff had to the safety items (i.e. violence, weapons, drug use, theft/vandalism, and bullying).
The final question on the survey asked students about their perception of school safety using a four choice likert scale. The survey for the students was administered on one school day to ensure anonymity of the participants. Teachers and staff members were given their survey consisting of 25 questions, and given a week to complete it. Once all the surveys were completed by students, faculty, and staff then the researcher picked them up from the school site for further analysis.

After receiving the surveys, the researcher compiled the data and began the analysis. Using an educational statistics program and a colleague with knowledge of the study requirements, data were analyzed on several different levels. First, the data was scrutinized using the background information that was provided by students, faculty, and staff. It was significant to the study to decipher whether or not age, gender, or ethnicity demonstrated any correlation to the perceptions of school safety. Then, data was analyzed according to student, faculty, and staff's responses to their exposure to the school safety items (i.e. violence, weapons, drug use, theft/vandalism, and bullying). Responses were recorded into the database and then analyzed to determine if there was any correlation between exposure to the items and the perceptions of students and staff concerning school safety. A correlation between background information on age, gender, and ethnicity, and amount of exposure to the school safety items was considered to conclude if there are any trends available in the data. Data was developed into tables and charts so that it may be visually represented within the confines of the study and used to provide conclusions for the action plan.
Data Analysis

As described in the procedures, data was analyzed on three different levels to examine correlational relationships. First, data about students' and staffs' perceptions of school safety was examined against the predictor variable of their age (or age group), gender, and ethnicity. The research also examined if there are any clusters of variables. Clusters can be determined if two or more similar variables together are revealing the same outcomes. An example of clusters in terms of this study would be when students with the same age and gender have a negative perception of school safety. All clusters concerning students, faculty, or staff who felt unsafe were considered in terms of age (or age group), gender, and ethnicity.

The next predictor variable which was considered when analyzing the data was the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to the different safety items (i.e. violence, weapons, drug use, theft/vandalism, and bullying). First, the survey asked if the safety item had been witnessed by the participant, and then if they answered 'yes', then it was determined how much exposure they have had to that particular item. During data analysis, it was first determined if any exposure at all had a correlation to students and teachers perceptions of school safety, then it analyzed if the quantity that is witnessed indicated a stronger negative perception.

Correlation between students' and staffs' perceptions was the final part of the data analysis. Concluding whether or not their perceptions aligned gave significant
information as to where definite problems exist at the school site. Their background information was not used in determining a correlation, only responses to exposure of the school safety items, since the background demographics were so dissimilar. If the data indicated that there was no correlation at all between students' and staffs' perceptions, then only the other data was used to determine where the indicators of a lack of school safety possibly exist.

**Summary**

Through the use of correlational and action research, and using the methodology described in this chapter, indicators to a negative perception of school safety were determined to decide if any adjustments needed to be made at the school site. By using a comprehensive survey gathering background information and students' and staffs' exposure to school safety items, a correlation between perception and actual threats to the safety of the school environment could be further understood and the findings could be added to the body of knowledge on school safety. Chapter four presents the results of the data accumulated from the student, staff, and faculty surveys. The data from the survey questions are analyzed to conclude which factors contribute to a negative perception of school safety.
Chapter IV

Data Analysis

This study examined and compared the perceptions of school safety by the students, faculty, and staff members of a middle school in Southern California. The primary goal of the study was to determine which factors are contributors to altering those perceptions about school safety. Another purpose of this study was to inspect whether or not perceptions were aligned with the reality of what is being observed and documented at the middle school. This chapter presents the data acquired from the student and staff/faculty surveys on their perceptions of school safety, and how much exposure they have had with issues concerning school safety. Tables and charts are provided to visually represent the statistical data derived from the surveys. Implications are presented to further demonstrate the impact and value of the data collected.

Response Rate

The student survey was distributed to 550 students in the 6th and 8th grades of a middle school in Southern California. Of those students, 382 completed the survey. The overall response rate was 69%. The response rate for each question in the student survey is located in Appendix A in Table A1 on page 92.

The staff/faculty survey was distributed to 47 staff/faculty members of the same middle school as the student participants. Of those staff and faculty members, 42 completed the survey. The overall response rate of the staff and faculty was 89%.
Data Presentation

The first section of student survey consisted of 3 questions regarding the students' demographics. The students were asked to provide their age, gender, and ethnicity. Of the student surveys completed, 21% are eleven years old, 22% are twelve years old, 29% are thirteen years old, 26% are fourteen years old, 2% are fifteen years old, and <1% are sixteen years old. In terms of gender, 52% of student participants were male, and 48% were female. When asked about their ethnicity, students responded according to the following demographic categories: 55% Hispanic/Latino, 15.4% African-American, 16% Multiple Backgrounds, 3.4% Caucasian/White, 1.8% Asian, 1.6% Filipino, and 6.3% declined to state. These figures roughly approximate the overall ethnicity of the school as detailed earlier in Chapter 3.

The faculty and staff were also asked to provide background information about their age group, gender, and ethnicity. The age groups of faculty and staff were distributed as follows; fourteen percent between the ages of 20-30, thirty-one percent between the ages of 31-40, twenty-two percent between the ages of 41-50, twenty-six percent between the ages of 51-60, and seven percent between the ages of 61-70. Of the faculty and staff that completed the survey, nineteen percent were male, and eighty-one percent were female. When asked about their ethnicity, faculty and staff
responses returned the following percentage of ethnicities: 69% Caucasian/White, 14% Hispanic/Latino, 7% African-American, 5% Filipino, and 5% declined to state.

Students, faculty, and staff were then asked questions to determine if and how much exposure they have had to school safety issues (i.e., weapons, drugs, fighting, vandalism, theft, and bullying). The breakdown analysis of raw data for each question is represented in table format. Students’ responses can be found on Table B1 in Appendix B on page 94, and faculty and staffs’ responses can be found on Table B2 in Appendix B on page 96.

After establishing the basic survey results, the final and most significant question in the student and faculty/staff surveys (How safe do you feel at school? How safe do you feel working at this school?) was analyzed to determine if there were any issues concerning students’, faculty, and staff members’ perceptions of school safety. The final question used a 4-point Likert scale, to which all students, faculty, and staff participants scored their responses with one of the following ratings: 1=I feel very safe at school, 2=I feel safe at school, 3=I feel unsafe at school, 4=I feel very unsafe at school. The results from the final question on the student survey are provided in Chart 1.
When analyzing the data, it became apparent that there was a problem concerning the students' perceptions of school safety. Of those students who participated in the survey 13% of students stated that they felt very unsafe at school and another 17% stated they felt unsafe at school as noted in Chart 1. Since this percentage is a fairly large amount of the student participants, this data point requires further investigation as to what the students are witnessing to make them feel that way.

After analyzing the students' responses to how safe they felt at school, the researcher analyzed the faculty and staff members' responses to the same question. Their responses were recorded and the data is presented in Chart 2.
The faculty and staff members' responses were significantly different than the students' responses. Only five percent of the faculty and staff members reported feeling unsafe in their work environment. Since only a small percentage of the adult population, it will be difficult to determine which school safety issues contribute to that perception.

**Student Data**

When examining Table B1 (Students' responses to school safety questions) on page 94, the researcher noted a high number of students responded to witnessing fighting, bullying, weapons, vandalism, theft, and drugs on school campus.

Of all the issues that all student participants responded to witnessing on their school campus, fighting was the most prevalent. Ninety percent of students reported
witnessing a fight at school. Of those students who said they witnessed fighting, 40.6% witnessed 1-5 fights, 22% witnessed 5-10 fights, and 29.6% witnessed over 10 fights in the last year. When students become witnesses to fighting between students, the act of witness itself may evoke the fear of being in the fight, or being pushed into one. Security or faculty/staff personnel attempt to intervene in school fights, but by the time they get to the scene of the altercation, a majority of the violence and threats have already taken place.

Another major concern about the data is the frequency of which students responded that they were witness to or a participant in bullying. Of the students who responded 38% of students admitted to being bullied at school. At the same time, 44.2% of students admitted to bullying another student. It is interesting that slightly more students admitted to bullying another student, than being bullied. As noted in literature review bullying is one school safety issue that is difficult to observe and control. However, with significant numbers of students being bullied or bullying another student, it is a major concern that needs to be addressed.

Students also responded to several questions concerning weapons on campus. When asked how many students have seen another student bring a weapon to campus, 40.6% responded positively. At the same time, 33% of all students reported witnessing another student threaten to use a weapon. The last question concerning weapons asked students if they have ever seen another student use a weapon on campus. 16% of students reported witnessing a student use a weapon on campus.
Questions related to drugs and drug use on campus was also analyzed. When students were asked if they had witnessed another student bring drugs to campus 53.4% of responded ‘yes’. When questioned about how many students have witnessed another student use drugs while at school, 43.5% of them responded ‘yes’. This question was then analyzed to determine how much exposure students have had to other students using drugs on campus. Of those students who reported seeing another student use drugs on campus, 27.5% witnessed drug use 1-3 times, 7.3% witnessed it 1-3 times, and 8.6% witnessed it 6 or more times.

The last item of school safety to be analyzed was the prevalence of students witnessing vandalism and theft. When students were asked about how many had witnessed vandalism on campus, 74.6% responded positively. Then, when students were asked how many had something stolen from them or someone they know, 73.8% responded positively. Theft and vandalism are concerns that often go undocumented by school administration and may require more attention to determine to whom students are reporting items missing or vandalized.

The demographic data provided by the students was then analyzed against responses of feeling unsafe or very unsafe to determine if any significance was available. Of the total number of those who felt unsafe or very unsafe (N=107), 60 felt unsafe and 47 felt very unsafe. Therefore, well over one quarter of students surveyed (30%) felt unsafe or very unsafe at the school site. Chart 3 displays an analysis of the ages at which those students felt unsafe or very unsafe.
As noted in Chart 3, the data correlating students’ age to their response of their perception of school safety is evenly distributed. Although fewer 15 year olds responded to feeling unsafe, they are a much smaller population of the students who were surveyed.

Students’ gender was then correlated against students who responded feeling unsafe or very unsafe at school. The correlation between the two components is graphically represented in Chart 4.
The data in Chart 4 indicate that the ratio of males to females when examining those who felt unsafe was almost 2:1 (Female: Male). However, when analyzing the responses of those who felt very unsafe, the ratio came much closer to 1:1 (Females, 24: Males, 25).

The last demographic data to correlate against student responses to feeling unsafe or very unsafe at school was students’ ethnicity. A breakdown of each response according to students’ ethnicity and feeling unsafe or very unsafe is provided in Chart 5.
The data revealed in Chart 5 indicates that more Latino, African-American, students with multiple backgrounds, and those who preferred not to respond carry the majority of the perception of feeling unsafe at school. However, Latino students comprise the majority (69%) of the school’s population. This information was considered when interpreting the data later in this chapter.

After the demographic data were analyzed, the responses of students who felt unsafe or very unsafe were analyzed against the responses to the school safety questions. The percentages of how each question was answered were determined to examine if there were any significant trends in the data. Table C in Appendix D on page 97 lists the percentages of the students who felt unsafe responses (N=107) in descending order of prevalence.
The data in Table C is the most important data in the study. Students who feel unsafe or very unsafe at school are actually witnessing fighting, theft, vandalism, drugs, weapons, and bullying at a fairly high rate. The question then becomes, how does this exposure affect the way students feel about being safe at school?

**Faculty/Staff Data**

The data compiled from the faculty/staff survey offered a very different perception of personal safety on this middle school campus when compared to the students' responses. With the exception of 2 participants, all faculty and staff participants indicated they felt safe or very safe working at the school. Two faculty/staff members indicated that they felt unsafe working at the school. This data is positive in terms of teachers' perceptions of school safety.

The analyses of the responses of faculty and staff members as to their exposure to school safety issues indicated the teachers are witnessing different levels of violence at school. Examining the data on fighting indicated that 85% of faculty and staff witnessed fighting on campus. Of those participants who stated they witnessed fighting, 47% of them responded to witnessing 10 or more fights, 25% witnessed 5-10 fights, and 26% witnessed 1-5 fights. The majority of the faculty/staff are witnessing high levels of fighting on the school campus. Although this is not impacting their perception of school safety, school administration may want to examine the data more closely.

Theft is another school safety issue that accumulated a significantly high response rate among faculty and staff. Ninety-eight percent of faculty and staff
responded ‘yes’ to having something stolen from themselves or someone they know while on campus. Of those who responded ‘yes’, 37% stated they experienced theft 1-3 times, 24% 3-6 times, and 39% 6 or more times. Fewer than half the staff have witnessed an excessive amount of theft at the school. Along with theft, vandalism was analyzed in the faculty and staff survey. Through the lens of the data, vandalism appears to be very prevalent at the school site. Of those participants who responded to the question, ninety-three percent of them stated they have witnessed the result vandalism on campus, while only seven percent stated they have not. Further investigation into the occurrence indicated that 54% of those who reported vandalism witnessed it 1-5 times, 33% reported witnessing vandalism 5-10 times, and 13% reported witnessing vandalism 10 or more times.

Faculty and staff also reported witnessing high levels of the act of bullying among the students on campus. Of those who responded to the question, eighty-eight percent stated they have observed bullying on campus. During further analysis of the question, the researcher noted that 40% of respondents witnessed bullying it 1-5 times, 17% witnessed bullying 5-10 times, and 43% witnessed bullying more than 10 times.

One of the most unexpected response analyses came from the question concerning faculty and staffs’ exposure to students bringing drugs or alcohol to school. Of those participants who responded, forty-eight percent stated they have seen students bring drugs or alcohol to school, and fifty-two percent stated they have not. When examining the prevalence of exposure, sixty percent of those who
Data Analysis

The most statistically significant data derived from this study was the students’ perceptions of school safety. Of the 382 students that were surveyed, 30% of those students claim to feel unsafe or very unsafe at school. This rate is slightly alarming since it equates to almost a third of the student population feeling unsafe in their school’s environment. In further analysis of the data, students’ perceptions were weighted against the demographic data provided by the students in the survey.

When examining the correlation between students’ ages and their perceptions, it was difficult to pin point one age that felt less safe than another. The data were quite evenly distributed among each student’s ages (11 yrs old to 16 yrs old). No one specific age group had a statistically higher percentage of feeling unsafe or very unsafe than another age. When analyzing the gender of the students against the students’ perceptions of school safety, there was a statistical discrepancy. The data indicated that the ratio of males to females when examining those who felt unsafe was almost 2:1 (Female, 42: Male, 24). However, when analyzing the responses of those who felt very unsafe, the ratio came much closer to 1:1 (Females, 24: Males, 25). The females responded to the feeling unsafe almost 100% more than the males did on this question of the survey. The final demographic data to correlate to students’ perceptions of school safety was ethnicity. Hispanic/Latino students provided the most responses to feeling unsafe at school; however, they were also the largest
student population of those who were surveyed (69% of the total students surveyed). Since they were the largest population, their significantly higher numbers of students feeling unsafe cannot be considered as statistically significant. Of the other student ethnic groups (African-American, Caucasian, Filipino, Asian, Multiple Backgrounds, and those who preferred not to respond), no one group appeared to be statistically significant. The numbers of students who responded to feeling unsafe in each of those ethnic groups was fairly even when compared to how many students total were surveyed from each ethnic group. Ethnicity did not appear to play a role in students’ perceptions of school safety.

After thoroughly exploring the demographic data against student demographic responses as to their perceptions of school safety, faculty and staffs’ responses were analyzed. Their responses were significantly different to those of the students. Of the forty-two faculty and staff members that were surveyed only two participants (4.76%) felt unsafe in their work environment. Since such a low percentage of faculty and staff members feel unsafe at work, it is nearly impossible to correlate their perceptions to the demographic data they provided. However, the responses of the two faculty/staff members that responded to feeling unsafe were analyzed to see what school safety issues they were exposed to. The first participant who felt unsafe working at school was a Caucasian male between the ages of 41-50, and the second was a Caucasian female between the ages of 51-60. Both reported exposure to fighting, drugs, weapons, theft, vandalism, and bullying on campus at various levels. The only answer where they differed dealt with witnessing students who had
threatened to use a weapon on campus, where the female participant indicated she had observed a student threaten to use a weapon and the male participant had not observed the behavior. The data cannot be analyzed to determine whether their age, gender, or ethnicity played a role in their responses, since many of the other adult participants had the same responses as they did to the demographic questions and still felt safe. Their responses to the school safety items is also inconclusive since many of the teachers who claim to feel safe at school have had the same amount of exposure to school safety issues. The next data to be analyzed with respect to faculty and staff are the responses to their exposure to different school safety issues.

One survey issue that appeared concerning was staff and faculty members' responses to questions about weapons. Thirty-two percent of the faculty and staff members stated they had seen a student bring a weapon to campus, and seven percent stated they have seen a student use a weapon. Although observing a student bring or use a weapon on campus does not appear to affect their perception of school safety, it is a concern for the school leaders to be constantly aware of.

Faculty and staff were also surveyed about drugs and drug use on campus. They were first asked how many of them have witnessed a student bring drugs or alcohol to school. Of the faculty and staff that responded, forty-eight percent reported witnessing a student bring drugs or alcohol to school. When asked how many of them have seen a student act inebriated in class, forty-one responded positively. How does this affect their ability to teach in the classroom? When they witness a student act inebriated in the classroom or on campus, is it immediately
reported to the administration? How is this information documented? Students using drugs and alcohol on campus may not only affect that specific student’s learning ability, but those students around them and how safe they feel while encountering these students.

In some middle schools, fighting among students can be a daily occurrence. This information was substantiated by the faculty and staffs’ responses to witnessing fighting on campus of this study’s middle school. Of the forty-two faculty and staff members who answered the question, eighty-six percent of them stated they witnessed fighting on campus. This percentage was closely aligned to the students’ responses to the same question. When students were asked how many of them have witnessed fighting on campus, 90.8% of them answered positively. Of all the questions asked within the surveys, this response was the most closely aligned between the two sets of participants (Students and staff). Fighting appears to be something almost every student, faculty, and staff member has been a witness to. More students are probably feeling unsafe due to witnessing fighting because of the increased potential for them being involved in one, unlike the faculty or staff who terminate the fights.

Vandalism and theft were the other school safety variables/questions where students, faculty, and staffs’ responses were closely aligned. Faculty and staff reported a higher incidence of vandalism (93%) and theft (98%), than students who reported vandalism (74.6%) and theft (73.8%). Faculty and staff who claim to feel
safe at school are reporting a higher level of these incidents than the students, which seems unusual. They may feel safe, while they feel their belongings are unsafe.

The most important data analysis revolved around the students who felt unsafe or very unsafe at school, and how they responded to the specific school safety issues (weapons, fighting, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying). The reason this data was so significant, is because it provides insight into why many of these students are feeling unsafe. When focusing solely on those students who feel unsafe or very unsafe, it was important to ascertain which of the school safety issues they were witness to the most. Table 3 on page 96 provides the percentages of responses to school safety questions of students who feel unsafe or very unsafe at school and was used in analyzing this data.

The school safety item that contained the highest percentage of observance was fighting. Of the students who feel unsafe or very unsafe, 91% of them had witnessed fighting. This closely correlated to the responses of all the students who responded at 90.8%. It is difficult to determine if this is a factor in students feeling unsafe, or if it is just something almost all students have witnessed. It may be a factor though as to why those specific students feel unsafe at school, especially if they had never been exposed to fighting until they reached middle school.

Vandalism and theft were another high-percentage response among students who feel unsafe or very unsafe at school. Of the students who feel unsafe and very unsafe, seventy-five percent reported having something stolen from them or someone they know, and seventy-two percent reported witnessing vandalism on campus. This
data was also closely aligned to the students' responses as a whole. The responses
from all student participants indicated that 73.8% had witnessed the effects of theft,
and 74.6% had witnessed the effects of vandalism. It is difficult to derive if there is a
correlation between theft, vandalism, and the negative perception of school safety
since the percentages of both student populations (students as a whole, and students
who felt either unsafe or very unsafe) is so closely aligned.

Students' responses to witnessing another student bring or use of alcohol or
drugs on campus did provide some insight into their perception of school safety. Of
the student participants as a whole, 53.4% claimed to have witnessed another student
bring drugs or alcohol to school, and 43.5% claimed to have witnessed another
student use drugs or alcohol at school. The percentage was much higher for those
students who feel unsafe at school. Of the students who felt unsafe or very unsafe at
school, 70% stated they had witnessed another student bring drugs to school, and
58% stated they have witnessed another student use drugs or alcohol at school. Many
more students who felt unsafe have witnessed another student bring or use drugs and
alcohol at school. For many students the initial exposure to drugs could be very
intimidating. Students are taught at a very young age that drugs and alcohol are
unhealthy and illegal, and that initial exposure could shock them in a way that
fighting, bullying, vandalism, and theft may not since they have probably witnessed
some of those things on television and in their own neighborhoods.

Another school safety issue to examine against students who felt unsafe was
their exposure to bullying at school. The first question about bullying asked students
how many times they themselves felt bullied. Students as a whole reported 38% and the students who felt unsafe reported 44%. Those who felt unsafe reported a slightly higher percentage than the students as a whole. The second bullying question asked students if they have ever bullied another student. Students as a whole reported 44.2% while the students who felt unsafe reported 53%. It was interesting that those who felt unsafe reported a higher percentage of bullying other students. This could be for several reasons. The students who felt unsafe may have been bullied themselves in the past, and in turn start bullying others to push back. Students who bully also could feel unsafe because they worry about others (including teachers, staff, and families) giving drastic consequences due to their actions of being a bully.

Another area where the percentages were higher for the group of students who felt unsafe at school was their exposure to different issues with weapons. When asked how many students have witnessed another student bring a weapon to school, 40.6% of the student population as a whole responded they had in comparison to 52% of those who felt unsafe at school (+11.4%). This carries further to those responding to have heard a student threaten to use a weapon, with 33% of the student population overall, and 42% of those who felt unsafe (+9%). When looking at statistics of those who’ve experienced a student use a weapon on campus, 16% of the overall student population reported they had as compared to 22% of those who felt unsafe at school (+6%). Each of the weapon categories saw an increase of response by those students who feel unsafe at school. It can be assumed that exposure to weapons or students threatening to use a weapon negatively affect students’ perceptions of school safety.
Determining a correlation between students feeling unsafe at school and what they have been witness to has been a difficult task. Many of the students who were witness to almost all of the school safety items claim that they still feel safe at school despite what they have seen. Students who felt either unsafe or very unsafe at school did not carry the majority of exposure to school safety items as previously hypothesized. In fact, almost all of the percentages between what all the students reported witnessing and what the students who felt unsafe were witnessing were about the same. This is what makes finding a correlation between the two variables extremely difficult. It cannot be specifically determined what is causing students to feel unsafe without further study on the subject matter. Drugs, bullying, and weapons may be factors of why students feel unsafe at this middle school, but a positive determination cannot be made. The study needs to be completed with an option for students who feel unsafe to provide response to what they feel specifically makes them feel that way. The survey results show that students at this middle school are exposed to an array of school safety issues at various different levels. The data did not provide any specific details on which items were the major cause of students feeling unsafe as their responses were so closely aligned with those of the student population as a whole.

**Interpretation**

The research questions guided the interpretation of the student, faculty and staff data compiled from the surveys. All of the research questions prepared for this study were designed to help determine the existence of a correlation between...
students', faculty, and staff members’ perceptions of school safety, their demographic data, and how much exposure they have had to school safety issues. Assessing the data from both populations and then determining where more scrutiny was required was vital to the study. The initial focus was on the responses of students, faculty, and staff on how safe they felt on campus. The remainder of the research would now focus on the student population since a significantly higher percentage of the student population felt unsafe (30%) compared to the adult population (5%). The remainder of the study’s focus was on students who responded to feeling unsafe and how they responded to the remaining survey questions, and determining if there was any alignment between the students’, faculty, and staff members’ responses.

While examining student participant group as a whole, understanding to what degree students were witnessing all the school safety issues was important, however, the goal of this research was to understand what altered students’ perceptions of school safety. The responses of the students who felt unsafe were then correlated to the demographic data provided (age, gender, and ethnicity) and the responses to school safety items (fighting, weapons, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying). Determining correlations between ages and ethnicity proved insignificant as the data was closely distributed among all the subgroups making it almost impossible to find correlations. The only finding within the demographic data which was mentionable was that more females than males (2:1) answered that they felt unsafe at school. Prior research in the field of school safety showed that females have more of a tendency to bully through words and exclusion than violence, and have less experience with drug
use and theft. This may affect the way they feel about school safety, especially if they have never been exposed to issues like that in their environment. Further research on gender perceptions of school safety with a larger population of students would provide more significant data on this topic.

While comparing students who did not feel safe at school to their responses to the school safety issue questions some significant findings in the data surfaced. The student group who felt unsafe had a higher exposure to drugs and alcohol (70%) as well as bullying (44%) when compared to the student participants as a whole (drugs: 53.4%; bullying: 38%). Bullying and drugs could both be possible indicators of why students perceive their learning environment as unsafe, however further research is necessary to make that specific determination. At the same time, students’ responses to all the questions about weapons proved higher for the subgroup that felt unsafe at school when compared to the overall student participant group. Exposure to different issues concerning weapons may also be an indicator of why students perceive their learning environment as unsafe.

When examining the inconsistencies in the data, only one finding truly stood out as conflicting or surprising. In both the student population as a whole and those who were segregated by responding that they felt unsafe at school, a higher percentage of students claimed to act as bullies instead of being bullied. Although this may not be a true inconsistency, the data was contradictory to what the researcher hypothesized prior to carrying out the study. Including this information in the
interpretations was necessary, since it provided an anomaly between the hypothesis and the data findings.

One major insight gained from this study is that a large number of students at the middle school level feel unsafe in their environment and the need for more training and implementation of programs is necessary to provide students with a safer optimal learning environment. Gathering specific data on how much exposure these students have had to school safety issues provided shocking information on how much violence, drugs, theft, and bullying these students witness.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation for this research study was the sample size. Some students and teachers declined to participate in the study, and therefore decreased the amount of the data collected and analyzed. Since the school survey was completely anonymous, it was anticipated that this limitation would not have a significant impact on the data collected. Teachers could not be mandated to participate, but would ideally perceive the significance of the research, and realize how much a short period of their time could contribute to learning about their school. Attendance of students on the day of survey administration also impacted the sample size. The survey was only given during one school day to maintain anonymity of the students taking the survey.

Another limitation of this study was the accuracy of the answers given by students. Some students may have embellished some of their answers, which could skew the data results. Also when considering the survey, a limitation to consider was the lack of personal written response by those who participated. If students, faculty,
and staff members had the opportunity to provide a written response to what made them feel unsafe, further conclusions from the data could have been made.

The author of this research, while working within the same school district, was not working directly at this school nor at this level (middle school) during the time of the study. Therefore, no bias was employed in the data collection, analysis, or interpretation of the data. There were no preconceived outcomes expected or anticipated, and while hypotheses were formulated, no definitive answer to them was projected or anticipated.

Summary

The data were collected, analyzed, and presented in various tables and charts in this chapter. Interpretations of the statistical differences and similarities were compared and conclusions were derived from the analyzed data. Limitations were considered and the author’s outsider status was evaluated to determine if any bias occurred during any portion of the study. Insights and interpretations of the data were made available, and the conclusions drawn and possible action plans are discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter V

Conclusions

Schools leaders today try their hardest to ensure students, faculty, and staff feel safe at their school sites. The problem is that some students still feel unsafe at school and the cause is not clear. This study’s research questions sought to discern what school safety issues are impacting how safe students feel at school. Sixth and eighth grade students, faculty, and staff from a middle school in southern California were surveyed to ascertain what school safety issues were prevalent and what the actual perceptions of school safety were. Data from those surveys provided insight and added to the body of knowledge on school safety. This final chapter summarizes the findings from the data analysis in Chapter 4, provides interpretations of the data, aligns findings with the research literature, and considers the implications for the future research and leadership action focused on school safety.

Summary of Findings

Determining a correlation between what makes faculty and staff feel unsafe at school and what they have been exposed to proved to be extremely difficult from a researcher’s perspective. The faculty/staff survey provided overwhelming evidence that teachers felt safe at the school. When analyzing the remaining data from the faculty and staff’s survey responses, I was surprised to find a high number of school safety issues they had been exposed to. Faculty and staff reported a high percentage of experiencing theft (98%), witnessing or observing the effects of bullying (88%),
seeing students fighting (85%), and experiencing students bringing drugs on campus (48%). Although very few staff or faculty members feel unsafe in their work environment, school leaders must assess where potential threats could be in the future. An effort by school leaders needs to be made to completely comprehend how school safety issues are impacting classroom management, teaching efforts, and student learning.

The student survey data clearly indicated that almost one third of the students sometimes felt unsafe in their school environment; whereas, a vast majority of the faculty and staff felt safe working at this school. This discrepancy should be of considerable concern for school administrators.

The first analysis of the student data was to examine who felt unsafe compared to their responses to the demographic questions of the survey (age, gender, and ethnicity). I found very little discrepancy between ages, gender, and ethnicity in regard to those reporting feeling unsafe at school. The responses closely mirrored those of the student participants group as a whole. The only significant finding in terms of the demographic data was that almost twice as many females than males responded feeling “unsafe” at school, while those feeling “very unsafe” were almost equal.

When the student survey results were analyzed to determine if the students who felt unsafe had an increase in response to the school safety questions, many conclusions emerged from the data. Students who felt unsafe had a significantly higher response to students bringing drugs to school (+17%), observing students use
drugs on campus (+14%), witnessing a student bring a weapon to school (+11.4%),
acting as a bully (+9%), hearing a student threaten to use a weapon (+9%), witnessing
a student use a weapon (+6%), and being personally bullied (+6%). All of these areas
showed an increase in response by the students who felt unsafe. These could be the
indicator variables of why those students feel unsafe at school.

While examining the alignment between the students' and the faculty and
staffs' responses to the school safety questions, a few correlations were found.
Although there was no correlation between responses to feeling safe at school, there
were some answers that were aligned in percentage of the whole group. Their
responses to the questions concerning weapons were close in percentage. Thirty-two
percent of adults and forty-one percent of students stated they have seen a student
bring a weapon to school. Thirty-six percent of adults and thirty-three percent of
students responded that they have heard a student threaten to use a weapon. Fighting
was another area where the percent of response was closely aligned. Eighty-six
percent of adults and ninety-one percent of students responded to witnessing fighting
at school. Lastly, witnessing a student bringing and using drugs at school had similar
percent responses between adults and students. Forty-eight percent of adults and
fifty-three percent of students indicated they have seen a student bring drugs to
school. At the same time, forty-one percent of adults and forty-three percent of
students responded to witnessing a student use drugs or act inebriated while at school.
This data provides an awareness of what adults and students witness at school. Now
determining where research can extend itself and look further into how this is affecting the climate of the school needs can be accomplished.

**Interpretation of Findings**

Determining a relationship between students’, faculty, and staffs’ perceptions of school safety and their responses to demographic questions and questions regarding exposure to different issues were the goals of this research. The survey data that was analyzed provided considerable insight into correlating these variables. It was concluded that little correlation could be made between a student, faculty, or staff members’ age (group), gender, and ethnicity, except that more female than male students felt unsafe at school. This could be interpreted in many different ways. Possibly, females might feel more unsafe because they have less experience with certain school safety issues than males. For example, research indicates that males are more likely to be involved with fighting, drugs, weapon, and theft, however females may be the onlookers of these events and be fearful of the implications and consequences being involved (Dinkes et.al, 2009). In regard to the adult survey data, little determinations could be made to what makes them feel unsafe since such a small percent of faculty and staff members felt unsafe (5%). Since little to no correlation could be made, it was important to examine the adults’ responses to exposure to determine where realistic threats in regard to school safety exist.

Faculty and staff responded with a very high percentage of witnessing fighting, theft, bullying, and drugs/drug use on campus. These statistics are important because they help to determine where serious problems may exist on campus.
Fighting is a usual occurrence on middle school campuses, so it was not astounding to see that eighty-six percent of the faculty and staff have been a witness to it. However, what needs to be determined in the future is how is fighting obstructs the teaching process in the classrooms? Another important statistic was how many faculty and staff members responded to theft. Almost all faculty and staff members (98%) stated they themselves or someone they know have had something stolen from them while at school. While this may not affect their perception of school safety, it probably makes teachers more cautious of where they put their personal belongings on campus and diminishes the trust that they have with their students.

One of the most disconcerting statistics from the adult survey was the percentage of adults who stated they have witnessed one student bully another. A large percentage (88%) of staff and faculty members responded to witnessing a student being bullied on campus. As stated in the literature review, bullying is one school safety issue that is currently on the rise. In a middle school setting, students use bullying to assert themselves due to a hyper self-confidence or fear of being ostracized by their peers (Rowan, 2007). Since so many teachers are witnessing bullying on this campus, an immediate response by school leaders would be to ensure that teachers were provided with training to handle situations and diffuse problems before they get out of hand. Surveying teachers about how qualified they feel to handle these situations would help determine where further training is required. Recognizing a student, who is at risk because they are being bullied, is also extremely important because it can keep serious issues at bay.
Lastly, the adult survey revealed almost half of faculty and staff members are witnessing students bringing drugs (48%) or alcohol to school and using drugs or alcohol at school (41%). When drugs or alcohol are brought to school, it can have a serious impact on the classroom setting and school environment as a whole. How can this not have an effect on the way teachers educate and students learn? When a teacher or other staff member catches a student with drugs or alcohol, it takes away from their regular classroom duties because they now have to take time to document and report it. However, to neglect to do so as would appear they condone those actions. It may not have an impact as far as their perception of school safety, but it does impact the time they spend with students.

The analyses of the data were focused solely on those students who felt unsafe, and determine which variables were predictors of those feelings. Comparing students who felt unsafe to the student population as a whole helped distinguish determine a heighten response among the groups who felt unsafe. The analysis showed that weapons, drugs, and bullying were observed more by the students who felt unsafe. Due to the increase in response these variables can then be interpreted as predictors of why this specific subgroup of students feels unsafe. Weapons, drugs, and bullying are all serious issues with concern to school safety. The shock of witnessing weapons and drugs for the first time can have a serious impact on how safe a student feels at school. Bullying, on the other hand, is an issue of serious concern among middle school students because it is an action that can go unnoticed by their peers and adults and where students may be afraid to come forward and
Running head: SCHOOL SAFETY

report. Students bully one another to gain respect from their peers often to hide a hyper self-confidence or lack self-esteem they may have. These students in particular might be bullying others because they feel unsafe at school. They might feel the only way to keep their personal wellbeing intact is to use bullying against other students. Bullying is a vicious cycle where no one really wins. To combat bullying, students need to feel as though the school environment is a safe haven, where they do not need to be afraid of someone threatening them or bullying them. Students also must feel comfortable coming forward against those who are doing it.

Some researchers might disagree on the interpretation that weapons, drugs, and bullying can be considered predictors of why students feel unsafe at school, or they might see the heighten response to those questions as merely a coincidence in the data, and they may be correct. However, there must to be reasons why these students are feeling unsafe at school. Weapons, drugs, and bullying are all serious issues that these students reported seeing more frequently than the student population as a whole. Therefore, future studies might ask students to specifically identify what makes them feel unsafe at school to make a more concrete determination.

Findings in Context

The literature review revealed that many school safety issues plague the educational environment. Previous research offers detailed insight into the prevalence of many of these problems, but lacks information regarding what makes students feel unsafe. When examining the overall results of the student survey compared to what the literature provided, many correlations could be made.
Previous research indicated that approximately 10% of middle school students are carrying weapons to school with them (Malecki & Damaray, 2003, p.169). The same study revealed that Hispanic students were 12-19% more likely to bring a weapon to school. The majority of the students who participated in this study (65%) were Hispanic or Latino. This study indicated that forty-one percent of the total student population have witnessed a student bring a weapon on campus and sixteen percent have witnessed a student use a weapon at school. Although a distinct correlation cannot be made to the previous research, it substantiates the claim that these middle school students are bringing these weapons to school and it requires attention by the administrators.

Research on the prevalence of drug use among students noted that twenty-two percent of high school students had been offered, sold, or given drugs in the past 12 months (Dinkes et. al, 2009, p.vi). Research on drug use among middle school students was unavailable; however the previous research somewhat contradicts the current study. In the above national study, researchers found that fifty-three percent of the student population stated that they have witnessed a student bring drugs or alcohol to school, a much higher rate than the previous study with high school students. This is greatly concerning considering these students are much younger. One would think that high schools would observe a much higher rate of drugs on campus, but in this case, it is just not true. Maybe the emphasis of intervention with reference to students and drugs needs to be prevention at a much younger age.
One area of research that somewhat contradicts the findings in this study is the examination of gender issues. Recent research indicates that more males than females are involved in fighting, drug use, and bringing weapons on campus (Dinkes et. al, 2009). In this study, more females than males (2:1) stated they feel unsafe at school. If more males than females are involved in such issues, then one would assume that more males would feel unsafe, but this study seemed to contradict that statement. It could be that males do not want to admit that they feel unsafe at school, and that more females are just afraid in general. The contradictory nature of the previous research needs to be noted since it makes the findings of prior research somewhat invalid.

The rate at which students were responding to many of the various school safety issues (weapons, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying) correlates to the prior literature which stated that these incidences are on the rise in schools. When thirty percent of the student population at this middle school site feels unsafe at school, it is an affirmation of the literature review. The literature review for this study put the current school safety problems into perspective, so that those who read this study can understand the problems that impact students, faculty, and staff members at school. The majority of the prior research on school safety focuses on the prevalence of the issues and does not focus on the perceptions of students and teachers. It is due to this lack of research that this study was performed. Very few correlations and contradictions can be made between the previous research and this study due to the
lack of exploration of the specific topic of students’ and teachers’ perceptions of school safety.

**Humility/Limitation**

The largest limitation that was noticed after the survey was administered and the data was analyzed was that the survey should have contained an area of open response for participants to verbalize specifically what makes them feel unsafe learning in this particular school environment. The data derived from this study provided considerable insight into what could be considered variables which alter the perception of school safety, but lacked specific information required to make definitive correlations. Additional detailed information from the participants could have helped to understand what particularly is making them feel unsafe, where these incidences are taking place, and if system that is put in place to handle these situations is working or failing.

Another limitation in this study is the participant size. Now that the results are analyzed and correlations have been determined, a larger sample size would have been helpful in constructing a more detailed view of what students, faculty, and staff members are witness to, and how it impacts their perception of school safety. Attendance of students on the day of survey administration may have impacted the sample size. The survey was only given during one school day to maintain anonymity of the students taking the survey. A larger sample size including a few schools from different districts with diverse populations of students and staff would
provide a more extensive view of what middle schools in particular are dealing with in terms of school safety.

A limitation that also requires consideration is the accuracy of the answers given by students. Some students may have embellished some of their answers or felt uncomfortable and not answered some of the questions, which may have skewed the data results. Faculty and staff members also might have not answered truthfully for fear of what the study might bring to light or say about their school. They may have experienced difficulty responding to questions if they were concerned about what the outcome might reveal.

Implications/Future Direction for School Leaders

Several different groups would benefit from the research and findings of this study. Students are considered the primary beneficiaries of this research. The ultimate goal of the research is to create safer school environments, which would benefit students above all others. Administrators and staff of the school involved in the study are the secondary beneficiaries. The information learned from this study can assist them as they reexamine security measures on campus and create other interventions to aid students with their negative feelings of school safety. This study might also provide administrators insight into what may be occurring on campus of which they may be unaware. The study revealed that thirty percent of the students surveyed feel unsafe or very unsafe at this school site. Heightened responses for items in the survey concerning weapons, drugs, and bullying may be the cause of why these students feel this way, although a specific determination cannot be made.
Administrators might be encouraged to look further into the issues to understand what specifically is making students feel unsafe, and what students need. One of the roles of a school leader is to create a safe and orderly school environment where every student feels safe to attend and learn. Research literature and this study indicate that fighting, weapons, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying are all major threats to school safety, and now considered a threat to the perceptions of adults and students as well.

**Further Study**

Researchers of school safety would also benefit from the outcomes of the study. While an abundance of current research focuses on the amount of bullying, fighting, theft, violence, vandalism, and drugs occurring on campuses, the field lacks research on how incidents of violence impacts the perceptions of teachers and students. Even though this study’s sample size is limited to one school, this study may provide some insight into which indicators made students and teachers feel most unsafe on campus. Researchers may choose to enhance the survey, allowing for freer responses from adults and students to specifically identify what impacts their perception of school safety. Using schools with several different types of populations from different areas (urban and rural) could provide a more comprehensive view of what school safety issues impact students and adults the most, so educational leaders know where to focus their research.

A safe learning environment is one of the key elements in providing quality education. Often in education, we carry on everyday without pause to examine how students perceive their learning environment. Following this research, a study should
analyze exactly what students believe is causing them to feel unsafe at school, and what schools can provide to assist in positively altering that perception.

**Research for Action**

Chapter 2’s literature review will assist this school leaders develop a plan of action. After completing the survey, it is apparent that many of the students of this school are feeling unsafe. The first step the school needs to take is to determine the scope of the problem. By analyzing the school’s discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, using the information from this study, and surveying students more thoroughly, school leaders can determine where the real threats to school safety exist.

Creating a school safety professional learning community (PLC) to assess the issues that students and teachers are facing can help involve the staff in acquiring solutions to their school safety issues. This PLC can help to ensure that teachers understand the necessary documentation that needs to be recorded when an incident occurs, and how essential it is to make the process uncomplicated for teachers. One of the problems noted in the literature review was that teachers can feel bogged down by the necessary paperwork, and therefore may not complete it properly. By creating a PLC and making the process simpler, it can improve the efficiency of the school day, and help administrators maintain better documentation.

The final piece of the action plan would be to improve the student’s connectedness to the school. This can be implemented in several ways. Involving parents as much as possible in their child’s educational environment is key to obtaining connectedness. Finding ways to get parents to meet in order to discuss their
child's behavior and progress at school, as well as attending school functions like 'Back to School Night' will assist this process. Another way is to hold school meetings with the parents to discuss issues such as bullying, drugs, and violence so that the school and parents can work together to create solutions. Making staff more accessible is another way to create connectedness. Counselors and administrators play an integral role in understanding students' problems and as a result, are often aware of what is happening on campus. Counselors could hold small focus groups with students deemed 'at risk' to assess where, when, and how school safety problems are happening to help prevent more problems from occurring. School leaders can use the data from referrals and suspensions to meet more frequently with students who are considered 'at risk' to follow up on problems from the past.

Summary

Understanding the feelings of the students we educate and the educators with whom we work is an extremely imperative part of creating an environment where students can learn and teachers can instruct. Safety is an issue in education that is constantly evolving, and educational leaders needs to change with the issues at hand. Students, faculty, and staff members of a school are witness to much more than most individuals would anticipate. As indicated in this study, many students feel unsafe in the school environment because of violence, weapons, drugs, vandalism, theft, and bullying. While some students are experiencing these issues for the first time, others are inured to them due to the environment in which they live. Looking toward the future, school leaders need to be in touch with how these occurrences negatively
affect students and their learning, as well those teachers and staff who observe their behavior. Since determining which specific variables affect students', faculty, and staff members' perceptions of school safety proved to be so difficult, additional research is necessary to establish more concrete conclusions. More research is required to more accurately evaluate the extent of the problem and establish solutions that can be more than just a temporary fix.
References


Malecki, C.K., & Demaray, M.K. (2003). Carrying a weapon to school and perceptions of school support in an urban middle school. Journal of...


Table A1. Students Response Rate to All Questions in the Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Survey Question</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question #1</td>
<td>99% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #2</td>
<td>99% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #3</td>
<td>99% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #4</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #5</td>
<td>41% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #6</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #7</td>
<td>35% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #8</td>
<td>97% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #9</td>
<td>18% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #10</td>
<td>99% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #11</td>
<td>92% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #12</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #13</td>
<td>35% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #14</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #15</td>
<td>53% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #16</td>
<td>97% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #17</td>
<td>43% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #18</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #19</td>
<td>75% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #20</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #21</td>
<td>74% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #22</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #23</td>
<td>37% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #24</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #25</td>
<td>43% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #26</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Faculty and Staff Survey Question Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>31% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>36% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>7% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>86% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>19% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>48% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>98% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>41% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19</td>
<td>93% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21</td>
<td>95% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23</td>
<td>88% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#24</td>
<td>100% responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student or someone else bring a weapon to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed someone bring a weapon to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student or someone threaten to use a weapon at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you seen a student or someone threaten to use a weapon at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student use a weapon on another student?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed a student use a weapon on another student?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed students fighting at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed students fighting at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student bring cigarettes to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed another student bring cigarettes to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed another student bring alcohol or drugs to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed another student bring alcohol or drugs to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed another student use alcohol or drugs while at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed another student use alcohol or drugs while at school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Student Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q18</th>
<th>Have you seen any vandalism at school?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>285 (75%)</td>
<td>92 (24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q19</th>
<th>If Yes, how many times have you witnessed vandalism at school?</th>
<th>1-5 times</th>
<th>5-10 times</th>
<th>10 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>181 (64%)</td>
<td>55 (19%)</td>
<td>49 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q20</th>
<th>Have you or someone you know had something stolen from them while at school?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>282 (74%)</td>
<td>94 (25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q21</th>
<th>If Yes, how many times have you or someone you know had something stolen?</th>
<th>1-3 times</th>
<th>3-6 times</th>
<th>6 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>131 (47%)</td>
<td>85 (30%)</td>
<td>65 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q22</th>
<th>Have you ever been bullied at school?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>145 (38%)</td>
<td>232 (61%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q23</th>
<th>If Yes, how many times have you felt bullied?</th>
<th>1-5 times</th>
<th>5-10 times</th>
<th>10 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75 (52%)</td>
<td>31 (21%)</td>
<td>39 (27%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q24</th>
<th>Have you ever bullied another student?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>169 (44%)</td>
<td>207 (54%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q25</th>
<th>If Yes, how many times have you bullied another student?</th>
<th>1-5 times</th>
<th>5-10 times</th>
<th>10 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>108 (64%)</td>
<td>26 (15%)</td>
<td>35 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table B2. Faculty/Staff Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student bring a weapon to this school?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bring a weapon to this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times 8 (62%)</td>
<td>3-6 times 3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student threaten to use a weapon at this school?</td>
<td>Yes 15 (36%)</td>
<td>No 27 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student threaten to use a weapon at this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times 9 (60%)</td>
<td>3-6 times 3 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student use a weapon at this school?</td>
<td>Yes 3 (7%)</td>
<td>No 39 (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student use a weapon at this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times 3 (100%)</td>
<td>3-6 times 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed students fighting at this school?</td>
<td>Yes 36 (86%)</td>
<td>No 6 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed students fighting at this school?</td>
<td>1-5 times 10 (28%)</td>
<td>5-10 times 9 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student bring cigarettes to this school?</td>
<td>Yes 8 (19%)</td>
<td>No 34 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bring cigarettes to this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times 5 (63%)</td>
<td>3-6 times 1 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student bring alcohol or drugs to this school?</td>
<td>Yes 20 (48%)</td>
<td>No 22 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bring alcohol or drugs to this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times 12 (60%)</td>
<td>3-6 times 4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student use alcohol or drugs or act inebriated while at this school?</td>
<td>Yes 17 (41%)</td>
<td>No 24 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student use alcohol or drugs or act inebriated while at this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times 14 (82%)</td>
<td>3-6 times 3 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>Have you witnessed vandalism at this school?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39 (93%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed vandalism at this school?</td>
<td>1-5 times</td>
<td>5-10 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21 (54%)</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>Have you, another staff member, or a student had something stolen from them while at this school?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40 (98%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>If yes, approximately how many times have you, another staff member, or a student had something stolen from them while at this school?</td>
<td>1-3 times</td>
<td>3-6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 (37.5%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student bully another student at this school?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37 (88%)</td>
<td>2 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bully another student at this school?</td>
<td>1-5 times</td>
<td>5-10 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table C. Students who felt unsafe (N=107), and their responses to school safety questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Safety Question</th>
<th>Percentage of students who responded 'yes'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed students fighting at school?</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you or someone you know had something stolen from them while at school?</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you seen any vandalism at school?</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed another student bring alcohol or drugs to school?</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed another student bring alcohol or drugs to school?</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever bullied another student?</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student or someone else bring a weapon to school?</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student bring cigarettes to school?</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been bullied at school?</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student or someone threaten to use a weapon at school?</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed a student use a weapon on another student?</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Please answer questions as honestly as possible. This survey is completely anonymous.

* Required

What is your age group? * Please indicate your age group
- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70

What is your gender? * Please indicate your gender
- Male
- Female

What is your ethnicity? * Please indicate your ethnicity
- Hispanic/Latino
- African-American
- Asian
- Filipino
- Caucasian/White
- Multiple Ethnicities
- Prefer not to respond

Have you ever witnessed a student bring a weapon to this school?
- Yes
- No
If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bring a weapon to this school?
- 1-3 times
- 3-6 times
- 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student threaten to use a weapon at this school?
- Yes
- No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student threaten to use a weapon at this school?
- 1-3 times
- 3-6 times
- 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student use a weapon at this school?
- Yes
- No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student use a weapon at this school?
- 1-3 times
- 3-6 times
- 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed students fighting at this school?
- Yes
- No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed students fighting at this school?
- 1-5 times
- 5-10 times
- 10 or more times
Have you ever witnessed a student bring cigarettes to this school?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bring cigarettes to this school?

- 1-3 times
- 3-6 times
- 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student bring alcohol or drugs to this school?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bring alcohol or drugs to this school?

- 1-3 times
- 3-6 times
- 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student use alcohol or drugs or act inebriated while at this school?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student use alcohol or drugs or act inebriated while at this school?

- 1-3 times
- 3-6 times
- 6 or more times
Have you witnessed vandalism at this school? Vandalism can be considered destroying personal or school property by writing/tagging it or breaking it

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed vandalism at this school?

- ☐ 1-5 times
- ☐ 5-10 times
- ☐ 10 or more times

Have you, another staff member, or a student had something stolen from them while at this school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, approximately how many times have you, another staff member, or a student had something stolen from them while at this school?

- ☐ 1-3 times
- ☐ 3-6 times
- ☐ 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student bully another student at this school? Being bullied means being picked on or teased, called names, excluded from a group of friends, threatened, or beaten up by another student

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If Yes, approximately how many times have you witnessed a student bully another student at this school?

- ☐ 1-5 times
- ☐ 5-10 times
- ☐ 10 or more times
How safe do you feel working at this school? Please look at answers closely

- [ ] I feel very safe at work/school
- [ ] I feel safe at work/school
- [ ] I feel unsafe at work/school
- [ ] I feel very unsafe at work/school
School Safety Survey - Student

Please read the questions completely, and answer as honestly as possible. Please circle your answers. Thank you for participating in this survey.

* Required

What is your age? * Please indicate your age

- □ 11
- □ 12
- □ 13
- □ 14
- □ 15
- □ 16

What is your gender? * Please indicate your gender

- □ Male
- □ Female

What is your ethnicity? * Please indicate your ethnicity

- □ Hispanic/Latino
- □ African-American
- □ Asian
- □ Filipino
- □ Caucasian/White
- □ Multiple ethnicities
- □ Prefer not to respond
Have you ever witnessed a student or someone else bring a weapon to school? A weapon is a gun, knife, or other item to hurt someone else

- C Yes
- C No

If Yes, how many times have you witnessed someone bring a weapon to school?

- C 1-5 times
- C 5-10 times
- C more than 10 times

Have you ever witnessed a student or someone threaten to use a weapon at school?

- C Yes
- C No

If Yes, how many times have you seen a student or someone threaten to use a weapon at school?

- C 1-3 times
- C 3-6 times
- C 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student use a weapon on another student?

- C Yes
- C No

If Yes, how many times have you witnessed a student use a weapon on another student?

- C 1-3 times
- C 3-6 times
- C 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed students fighting at school?

- C Yes
- C No
If Yes, how many times have you witnessed students fighting at school?

- □ 1-5 times
- □ 5-10 times
- □ 10 or more times

Have you ever witnessed a student bring cigarettes to school?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If Yes, how many times have you witnessed another student bring cigarettes to school?

- □ 1-3 times
- □ 3-6 times
- □ 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed another student bring alcohol or drugs to school?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If Yes, how many times have you witnessed another student bring alcohol or drugs to school?

- □ 1-3 times
- □ 3-6 times
- □ 6 or more times

Have you ever witnessed another student use alcohol or drugs while at school?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If Yes, how many times have you witnessed another student use alcohol or drugs while at school?

- □ 1-3 times
- □ 3-6 times
- □ 6 or more times
Have you seen any vandalism at school? Vandalism is destroying someone else's or school property by writing on it or breaking it.

- C  Yes
- C  No

If Yes, how many times have you witnessed vandalism at school?

- C  1-5 times
- C  5-10 times
- C  10 or more times

Have you or someone you know had something stolen from them while at school?

- C  Yes
- C  No

If Yes, how many times have you or someone you know had something stolen?

- C  1-3 times
- C  3-6 times
- C  6 or more times

Have you ever been bullied at school? Being bullied means being picked on or teased, called names, excluded from a group of friends, threatened, or beaten up by another student

- C  Yes
- C  No

If Yes, how many times have you felt bullied?

- C  0-5 times
- C  5-10 times
- C  10 or more times

Have you ever bullied another student? Please try to be honest

- C  Yes
- C  No
If Yes, how many times have you bullied another student?

- 0-5 times
- 5-10 times
- 10 or more times

How safe do you feel at school? Please look at answers closely

- I feel very safe at school
- I feel safe at school
- I feel unsafe at school
- I feel very unsafe at school