ABSTRACT

SCHOOL SAFETY: COMPARING STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS WITH FACULTY MEMBERS’ PERCEPTIONS

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This study compares students’ perceptions of school safety to faculty members’ perceptions of school safety. High school seniors and faculty members from a suburban high school were administered school safety surveys in order to determine if students and faculty members as well as males and females have different views of school safety. Survey responses from faculty members and students yielded results that were not significantly different. Survey responses from males and females yielded results that were significantly different. Males’ views of school safety were more positive than those of females. This study also addressed various indicators of school safety since there is a lack of in-depth research about specific factors related to school safety.
SCHOOL SAFETY: COMPARING STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS WITH FACULTY MEMBERS’ PERCEPTIONS

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Dedication

This publication is dedicated to my family who has provided me with patience, support, and unconditional love. I specifically dedicate this publication to my grandfather, William Raymond Turnbull, who frequently showed his enthusiasm about this topic and offered above and beyond resources and support. Unfortunately, my grandfather passed away one year prior to the completion of the final product.
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School Safety: Comparing Students’ Perceptions with Faculty Members’ Perceptions

Introduction

Schools should be safe places for teaching and learning. Crime and violence in schools affects the perpetrator(s), victim(s), bystander(s), school, community, and the overall educational process (Henry, 2000). This study compares school safety perceptions between the following groups: faculty members and students, males and females, male faculty members and female faculty members, and male students and female students. This study also addresses various indicators of school safety since there is a lack of in-depth research about specific factors related to school safety.

Literature Review

Some of the factors related to school safety are the use of weapons, the presence of gangs, drug and alcohol abuse, outsiders’ access to the school building, bullying, and cyberbullying (DeVoe & Bauer, 2001). Other factors include vandalism of school property (Dedel, 2005), fire setting (U.S. Fire Administration, 2007), and teacher injury (Robers, Kemp, Rathbun, Morgan, & Snyder, 2014).

The review of the literature includes theoretical views of human needs; information about school violence, specifically weapons, gangs, vandalism, fire setting, drug and alcohol abuse, and outsiders’ access to the school building; harmful behaviors that have the potential to turn violent, specifically bullying and cyberbullying; effects of school violence on teachers; and safety perceptions of students and teachers, including the school psychologist’s role in creating a safe school environment.

Theoretical Views of Human Needs

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs consists of physiological needs, such as water, air, food, and sleep; safety needs, such as safety, security, and shelter; social needs, such as belonging, love, and affection; esteem needs, such as self-esteem, personal worth, social recognition, and accomplishment; and self-actualization, such as self-awareness and interest in fulfilling potential (Cherry, 2013). These levels must be satisfied in the previously mentioned order. The two needs that contribute to students’ perception of school safety are safety needs and self-esteem needs. Therefore, students must feel safe before meeting their self-esteem needs. Students must feel both physically safe in the school building and comfortable with themselves. In order for them to do so, school administrators should recognize and address these needs by
increasing the physical security of the building and decreasing the prevalence of violence, bullying, and cyberbullying.

Creating a safe and supportive school that is free from victimization is vital to support accessible education (Rossen & Cowan, 2012). Relational aggression can be defined as “harm within relationships that is caused by covert bullying or manipulative behavior” (Young et al., 2010, p. 1). Being a victim of this can result in experiencing social anxiety, peer rejection, loneliness, and depression (Crick, Casas, & Nelson, 2002). Physical fights between the perpetrators and victims may also follow relational aggression incidents (Crick, Casas, & Nelson, 2002). Students who feel that they are safe and supported in their school are more likely to report threats to safety (Syvertsen, Flanagan, & Stout, 2009).

**Overview of School Violence**

One of the primary challenges schools face in keeping students safe is the preponderance of violent experiences that occur on school property. Violence in schools affects the involved individuals, the school, the educational process, and the surrounding community (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012). School violence can have a negative impact on a student’s ability to learn (Robers et al., 2012). Both the students’ experiences of victimization and perceptions of school violence have a large impact on their academic performance (Myers, 2006).

A number of extreme violence types have been identified as occurring in schools in recent times. Such types include the use of weapons, gangs, vandalism of school property, fire setting, drug/alcohol abuse, physical/verbal abuse of teachers, and access to outsiders.

**Weapons.** During the 2009-2010 school year, a larger number of suburban schools involved the students in the administration of drills concerning written procedures for school shootings than that of city schools or rural schools (Neiman & Hill, 2011). According to Poland (2007, para. 4), the United States Secret Service has concluded the following: (1) “Almost all of the perpetrators told someone about their plans to commit an act of violence,” (2) “Revenge was the primary motive,” and (3) “Two-thirds of the perpetrators were suicidal and were the victims of bullying.”

The Guns-Free Schools Act requires school districts “to expel students who bring firearms to school” (Wauchope, 2009, p. 1). Furthermore, many states have enacted zero-tolerance policies concerning possession of not only weapons, but illegal drugs, assault, and
vandalism (Wauchope, 2009). In 2011, a higher percentage of males than of females reported being threatened or injured with a weapon while at school (Robers et al., 2013).

**Gangs.** One of the most disruptive forms of violence students experience is gang activity. Gang activity in the schools affects the educational environment and “perception of school safety” (Robers et al., 2012, p. 36). During the 2009-2010 school year, at least one gang-related crime was reported in 10% of city schools compared to 5% of suburban schools and 2% of rural schools (Neiman & Hill, 2011, p. 3). Gang activity on school property often involves the use of a weapon, which can be used to injure or threaten others.

Signs of gang membership may include the following: disruptive behavior, not submitting to authority, decline in grades, change in clothing as well as friends’ change in clothing, and receiving calls from unidentified people and/or people with nicknames (Johnston, 2013).

**Vandalism.** *School vandalism* can be defined as “willful or malicious damage to school grounds and buildings or furnishings and equipment” (Johnson, 2005, pg. 1). Examples can include glass breakage and graffiti (Johnson, 2005). In 2011, there was no measurable difference in the percentage of male students and the percentage of female students who reported seeing hate-related graffiti at school (Robers et al., 2013). Examples of school vandalism that are associated with high social cost include destruction of a media center, gang-related graffiti, and hate-motivated graffiti (Johnson, 2005).

“[E]ven as concerns about student and staff safety from violence have become school administrators' top priority, vandalism and break-ins continue to occur regularly and to affect a significant proportion of U.S. schools “ (Johnson, 2005, pg. 3). All incidents of school vandalism have some effect on the school environment, but not all have the exact same effect. “Events with high monetary and social costs typically occur less frequently than those with low monetary and social costs” (Johnson, 2005, p. 4).

**Fire Setting.** Although experimenting with fire is a normal part of adolescence, some children do not grow out of that behavior (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2007). There are a number of characteristics that some children have that could indicate fire setting is of no concern to them (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2007). One characteristic includes feeling powerless; this tends to create a position of
power and can be done through fire setting (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2007).

Typical qualities of fire-setters include the following: being less assertive, being less physically aggressive, being more socially isolated, being bored, seeking attention, experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol, having impulse control problems, having a family history of a tragedy involving a fire, and having a family history of mental illness (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2007). The offense cycle includes 1) stressful event, 2) interpersonal unmet needs, 3) fantasy about fire-setting, 4) preparing/planning the fire, and 5) setting the fire (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2007).

Drug/Alcohol Abuse. It is no surprise that alcohol is the “most widely used substance of abuse among American youth” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012, p. iii). Ten percent of 9- to 10-year-olds have already experimented with alcohol (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Even though adolescents drink less often than adults drink, they drink more heavily (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). In fact, 92% of the alcohol consumed by 12- to 14-year-olds is via “binge drinking” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Binge drinking can be defined as a pattern of consuming alcohol that produces a Blood Alcohol Content of 0.08 gram percent or above (Courtney & Polich, 2009). For the typical male, binge drinking refers to consuming five or more alcoholic drinks in about two hours (Courtney & Polich, 2009). For the typical female, binge drinking refers to consuming four or more alcoholic drinks in about two hours (Courtney & Polich, 2009). In 2011, 5.1% of 9th through 12th graders consumed at least one alcoholic beverage at school on at least one day (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

According to federal survey results, the use of marijuana is more prevalent than the use of cigarettes among 8th graders, 10th graders, and 12th graders (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). The following statistics concerning behaviors displayed by 9th through 12th graders on at least one day on school property were determined in 2011: 4.9% of students smoked cigarettes, 4.8% of students chewed tobacco, 5.9% of students used marijuana, and 25.6% of students had possession of illegal drugs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

Outsiders’ Access. A number of security measures have recently been established in schools: security cameras, metal detectors, locker checks, increased supervision in the hallways,
student identification cards/badges, locked doors during school hours, and a requirement for school visitors to sign in (Robers et al., 2012). The most reported factors that limit the prevention of crime in schools include insufficient funds, discipline policies, and inadequate, or lack of, alternative placements/programs (Neiman & Hill, 2011).

School safety requires commitment from students, faculty, parents, and staff (Poland, 2007). Two ways to receive that commitment include the principal conducting leadership meetings with a variety of students in order to discuss important issues and students and parents signing safety contracts that contain a commitment to collaboratively reduce and report victimization of others (Poland, 2007).

Harmful Behaviors Turned Violent

When the following behaviors escalate and become violent, the school community becomes greatly affected, causing the entire educational process to become affected.

Bullying. In 2009, 9% of 12–18-year old students reported having hate-related words communicated to them at school while 29% of students reported seeing hate-related graffiti displayed at school (Robers et al., 2012). Also in 2009, 28% of students reported being victims of bullying at school (Robers et al., 2012). In 2011, a higher percentage of females than of males ages 12-18 reported being victims of insults, rumors, and purposeful exclusions from activities (Robers, Kemp, Truman, & Snyder, 2013).

Reports have shown that teachers only observe about 4% of bullying incidents (Petrosino, Guckenburg, DeVoe, & Hanson, 2010). Despite the fact that 85% of bullying incidents occur in the presence of others, both victims and bystanders tend to not report the bullying (Kazdin and Rotella 2009). One study found that this reluctance increases with age (Oliver and Candappa, 2007). During the 2009–2010 school year, a higher percentage of reports of bullying originated from middle schools than from high schools (Neiman & Hill, 2011).

In order for effective interventions to be placed in the schools, there must be student-focused strategies that fit the context of the individual school (Seeley, Tombari, Bennett, & Dunkle, 2011). Some recommendations for developing anti-bullying programs include offering mentoring programs, addressing the transition from the elementary school level to the middle school level, and increasing student engagement (Seeley et al., 2011).

The effects of bullying can last a lifetime (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012). Negative feelings can cause individuals to become more socially and academically withdrawn;
they could experience a lack or loss of confidence and disassociation from school and friends. Students who feel higher levels of anger typically become more aggressive. Studies have shown that being a bully is an indicator of future involvement with criminal and/or antisocial behavior (Petrosino et al., 2010). The United States Secret Service documented that two-thirds of school shooting attackers had backgrounds of bullying victimization (Vossekull, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). To help student cope with bullying, teachers have suggested that students should engage themselves in schoolwork and extracurricular activities (Seeley et al., 2011).

**Cyberbullying.** Cyberbullying can be simply defined as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010, p. 2). Petty forms of cyberbullying can include being mocked, being ignored, or being disrespected (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). These are also minor forms of traditional bullying, which show the similarity of the two, namely in characteristics such as repetition, intention, and power imbalance (O’Brien & Moules, 2010).

The effects of cyberbullying may be much worse than those of traditional bullying (O’Brien & Moules, 2010). According to O’Brien & Moules (2010, p. 12), cyberbullying is more severe and dangerous than traditional bullying due to three factors:

1. Cyber-bullying can be anonymous.
2. It can have a rapid effect as comments/videos are sent around the world in minutes.
3. It is a form of bullying that victims cannot easily escape from.

Cyberbullying victims are 1.5 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who are not victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

“Gossip and rumor, aided by cell phones and the Internet, spreads throughout your school, to other schools, other cities, other states and other nations within hours, if not moments” (Willoughby, 2012, p. 13). The degree of seriousness of cyberbullying can also be due to its secretive nature and the invasion of personal space (O’Brien & Moules, 2010). A common piece of information that has been found is that young individuals do not realize the harm that could potentially be inflicted upon them when they are sending cruel text messages and emails about someone else. Cyberbullying can cause negative psychological effects, which make targets feel angry, sad, afraid, and powerless (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). These effects are intensified when the
students are unaware of who is bullying them; therefore, they experience higher levels of powerlessness and fear (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009).

Cyberbullying has been described as “the most common online risk for all teens” and “a peer-to-peer risk” (O’Keeffe, Clarke, & Media, 2011, p. 801). In 2011, a higher percentage of female students than of male students reported being victims of cyberbullying (Robers et al., 2013). In 2011, a higher percentage of females than of males reported being victims of cyberbullying once or twice during the school year (Robers et al., 2013). However, a higher percentage of males than of females reported being cyberbullying victims at least once or twice a month (Robers et al., 2013). In addition, 32 percent of female students and 16 percent of male students reported notifying an adult after being victimized through cyberbullying (Robers et al., 2013).

**Effects of School Violence on Teachers**

More than 25% of teachers have been threatened by a student during school hours (Chamberlin, 2010). The following statistics are from the 2009-2010 school year: 27% of teachers reported that they had been verbally threatened; 37% had obscene or sexual remarks said to them; 31% have either been groped by a student or had an obscene gesture made toward them; 19% reported being intimidated by a student; 13% reported being intimidated by a student’s parent; and 5% had seen a physician for injuries resulting from an attack (Chamberlin, 2010). In addition, each year, 7% of teachers are threatened with injury, and 3% of teachers are physically attacked by students (American Psychologist Association, 2014). Maxine Bradshaw of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers has stated, “We live in a time now where anything goes and young people know all their rights but have no idea of their responsibilities. Parents and teachers seem powerless to discipline children for fear of repercussions or, worse still, prosecution” (Lipsett, 2009, para. 16).

**Investigating School Safety Conditions and Perceptions of Students and Teachers**

Given the importance of these school safety issues, it is vital that these issues related to school safety be investigated so that possible solutions can be found. Until recently, there has not been a strong research emphasis on students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the safe quality of their school environment. However, the Baltimore City Public Schools School Climate Survey, “Perceived School and Neighborhood Safety, Neighborhood Violence and Academic Achievement in Urban School Children” (Milam, Furr-Holden, & Leaf, 2010) was designed to
investigate these issues. It has been “conducted each year to assess students’ satisfaction with various factors of the school climate” (Johnson, 2009, p. 117). One section of this survey focuses on school safety issues such as possession of weapons at school, presence of gangs at school, vandalism of school property, fires being set at school, fighting amongst students, bullying, drug/alcohol abuse, physical/verbal abuse of teachers, and outsiders gaining access into the school building.

Although the Baltimore City Public Schools’ study did not include statistical analyses, its results were presented in percentages. In 2011, survey results indicated that 69% of students and 86.2% of faculty members felt safe in their respective school. When asked about student possession of weapons, 34.5% of students and 11.8% of faculty members reported that it was a problem. When asked about vandalism of school property, 49.1% of students and 29.3% of faculty members reported it as problematic. When asked about student drug/alcohol abuse, 34% of students and 18.1% of faculty members reported it as problematic behavior. When asked about fire setting, 31.3% of students and 7% of faculty members viewed it as a problem. When asking about fighting among students, 63.6% of students and 44.2% of faculty members reported it being problematic. When asked about gangs, 35.7% of students and 15.7% of faculty members reported their presence being a problem in their respective school. The top two concerns of both students and faculty members were students picking on other students and fighting among students. Outsiders’ access into the school was within the top four concerns of students and faculty members. Both populations viewed fire setting as the least problematic behavior reported (Baltimore City Public Schools, n.d.).

According to Rossen & Cowen (2012), “creating a safe and supportive school environment is critical to preventing and deterring bullying, mitigating the effects of aggression and intimidation, and supporting learning and academic achievement” (p. 2). They state that safe and supportive school environments reduce bullying, violence, and a sense of fear while improving academic achievement.

The school psychologist’s role. School psychologists are trained professionals who help students succeed academically, behaviorally, socially, socially, and emotionally (Rossen & Cowan, 2012). They collaborate with other professionals, including educators, to create and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment (Rossen & Cowan, 2012). In addition to being trained in data-based decision making, administering assessments, and establishing progress
monitoring systems, school psychologists are trained in counseling and other school-based interventions (Rossen & Cowan, 2012). School psychologists are also able to identify relational aggression through administering behavior rating scales, social skills assessments, sociometric measures, and interviews with students, teachers, and parents (Young, Nelson, Hottle, Warburton, & Young, 2010). School psychologists participate in school crisis teams and “collaborate with school administrators and other educators to prevent and respond to crises” (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013, p. 11). Part of their specialized training includes conducting risk and threat assessments (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). They collect and interpret data and conduct evaluations in order to ensure that “decisions made about students, the school system, and related programs and learning supports are based on appropriate evidence” (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013, p. 11).

**Purpose of study.** Based on current research, there is limited information describing differences in school safety perceptions. This study was conducted in order to determine if students and faculty members as well as males and females have different views of school safety. This study was also conducted in order to address various factors related to school safety since there is a lack of in-depth research about what school safety entails.

**Hypotheses.** Based on results from the study conducted by Baltimore City Public Schools, it was predicted that the present study would find that faculty members view school as a safer place than students do. In addition, based on bullying and cyberbullying statistics, it was predicted that the present study would find that males view school as a safer place than females do.

**Method**

**Participants**

Students who participated in this study were those who did not return parent “Opt Out” forms to their teachers and chose to complete the survey. The principal gave the opportunity to participate in the study only to the 12th graders due to the sensitivity of the survey. Faculty members who participated in this study were those who did not return faculty “Opt Out” forms to their principal and chose to complete the survey. Participants included 134 high school seniors (out of 179 seniors enrolled in the building and 734 total students enrolled in Grades 10 through 12 in the building) and 42 faculty members (out of 79 faculty members in the building) from a suburban high school in Maryland.
Demographic information that was collected in this study indicated the following percentages of participants: 80.7% White (Non-Hispanic), 6.3% African American, 2.3% Hispanic, 1.1% Native American, 3.4% Mixed, and 1.1% Other. The percentage of participants who did not provide demographic information was 4.0%. The following information describes the demographics of the students who participated in this study: 80.0% White (Non-Hispanic), 8.0% African American, 1.5% Asian, 1.5% Hispanic, 1.5% Native American, 4.5% Mixed, and 1.5% Other. The percentage of students who did not provide demographic information was 1.5%. The following information describes the demographics of the faculty members who participated in this study: 83.0% White (Non-Hispanic) and 5.0% Hispanic. The percentage of faculty members who did not provide demographic information was 12.0%.

According to the 2010 United States Census, the following demographic information was collected from the suburban Maryland city in which this study was conducted: 89.4% White (Non-Hispanic), 6.4% African American, 0.9% Asian, 1.2% Hispanic, 0.2% Native American, 2.8% Mixed, and 0.3% Other. The following demographic information was collected from the entire State of Maryland: 58.2% White (Non-Hispanic), 29.4% African American, 5.5% Asian, 8.2% Hispanic, 0.4% Native American, 2.9% Mixed, and 3.6% Other. Demographic information collected in this study is believed to be an accurate representation of the suburban Maryland city in which this study was conducted.

Materials

The researcher created parent “Opt Out” forms and faculty “Opt Out” forms for this study. The parent “Opt Out” form can be found in Appendix A; the faculty “Opt Out” form can be found in Appendix B. The parent form instructed the parents to complete the form and return it to the school if they wished that their child not participate in the study. The faculty form instructed the faculty to complete the form and return it to the school if they wished to not participate in the study.

This study used a student survey and a faculty survey. Participants responded to items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree: 1, Disagree: 2, I Don’t Know: 3, Agree: 4, Strongly Agree: 5). The student survey contained 13 items; the faculty survey contained 14 items. Eleven of the questions on each survey were adapted from the Baltimore City Public Schools School Climate Survey, “Perceived School and Neighborhood Safety, Neighborhood Violence and Academic Achievement in Urban School Children” (Milam, et al., 2010).
Permission to use the school safety questions of the Baltimore City Public Schools School Climate Survey was granted to the researcher. One cyberbullying question was written by the researcher since it is imperative to study this more recent phenomenon as well. Another question (the same question in each survey) was duplicated and reversed in accordance with standard survey guidelines. Demographics were also collected from both populations. The demographics on the student survey included gender, ethnic background, language(s) spoken in the home, age, and grade. The demographics on the faculty survey included gender, ethnic background, language(s) spoken in the home, and having a background in or substantial knowledge of school safety. The student survey can be found in Appendix C; the faculty survey can be found in Appendix D.

Procedures

After the researcher received permission from the principal to conduct the study in the respective high school, the researcher distributed student “Opt Out” forms, faculty “Opt Out” forms, study surveys, and faculty surveys to the principal. The principal distributed the faculty “Opt Out” forms and the faculty surveys to the teachers and instructed them to complete the surveys if they wished to participate in the study and to complete the “Opt Out” forms if they wished to not participate in the study. The principal received completed surveys, but did not receive any completed “Opt Out” forms.

The principal distributed the parent “Opt Out” forms to the teachers and instructed them to distribute the forms to the students and tell the students to have their parents complete the forms and return them to the school within the week if they wish that their child not participate in the study. The teachers did not receive any “Opt Out forms.” The principal distributed the student surveys to the teachers and instructed them to distribute them to the students. When the teachers collected the completed surveys from the students, they returned them to the principal. The principal mailed the completed student surveys and the completed faculty surveys to the researcher.

Data Analysis

T tests and ANOVAs were conducted in order to determine the possible existence of differences between the responses from students and faculty members and differences between the responses from males and females. Due to each variable being represented by one question
on each survey, a MANOVA was determined to be the least appropriate test to conduct on the collected data. No personal identifiers were included in the final, presented results.

Results

Faculty Members Compared to Students

When the mean of the student responses on all items was compared to the mean of the faculty members’ responses on all items, the responses yielded results that were not significantly different, \( t(79.199) = .956, (p > .05) \). Refer to Appendix E for specific results.

When comparing views of faculty members to views of students in further depth, the following areas were determined significantly different with no assumption of equal variance: students feeling safe going to and from school, gangs, and student vandalism of school property. Faculty members did not think that students feel as safe going to and from school than students reported, \( t(90.244) = 4.316, (p < .001) \). Faculty members also reported the presence of gangs being more problematic than students reported, \( t(65.109) = 2.513, (p < .05) \). In addition, students did not view student vandalism of school property problematic as faculty members reported, \( t(66.157) = 2.785, (p < .01) \). Refer to Appendix F for specific results.

While the researcher’s hypothesis stated that faculty members feel safer in school than students do, the present study produced contradicting results on specific issues.

Males Compared to Females

Questionnaire responses from males and females yielded results that were significantly different, \( t(162.565) = 4.832, (p < .001) \). Refer to Appendix G for specific results.

Questionnaire responses from male faculty members and female faculty members yielded results that were significantly different, \( t(34.698) = 2.152, (p < .05) \). Refer to Appendix H for specific results.

When comparing views of male faculty members to views of female faculty members in further depth, the following areas were determined statistically different with no assumption of equal variance: feeling safe at school and physical or verbal abuse of teachers. Male faculty members reported feeling safer at school than female faculty members reported, \( t(34.983) = 2.326, (p < .05) \). In addition, female faculty members reported physical or verbal abuse of teachers as more problematic than male faculty members reported, \( t(34.228) = 4.130, (p < .001) \). Refer to Appendix I for specific results.
Analysis of questionnaire responses from male students and female students yielded results that were significantly different, $t(126.224) = 4.309, (p < .001)$. Refer to Appendix J for specific results.

When comparing views of male students to views of female students in further depth, the following areas were determined significantly different with no assumption of equal variance: feeling safe at school, feeling safe going to and from school, gangs, student vandalism of school property, fighting among students, students picking on other students, physical or verbal abuse of teachers, and cyberbullying. Male students reported feeling safer at school than female students reported, $t(130.406) = 2.711, (p < .01)$. They also reported feeling safer going to and from school than female students reported, $t(126.224) = 4.309, (p < .001)$. Female students viewed gangs, $t(124.222) = 3.167, (p < .01)$, student vandalism of school property, $t(130.714) = 2.350, (p < .05)$, fighting among students, $t(123.533) = 3.296, (p < .01)$, students picking on other students, $t(130.976) = 2.300, (p < .05)$, physical or verbal abuse of teachers, $t(129.405) = 2.217, (p < .05)$, and cyberbullying, $t(125.897) = 2.965, (p < .01)$, as more problematic than male students reported. Refer to Appendix K for specific results.

Males’ overall views of school safety were more positive than those of females among both faculty and students. These results support the researcher’s hypothesis of males viewing school as a safer place than females do.

**Discussion**

Although their results were not analyzed for significant difference, the 2011 Baltimore City Public Schools School Climate Survey results seem to indicate that faculty members felt safer (86.2%) in their respective school than students did (69%). In the present study, questionnaire responses from faculty members and students yielded results that were not significantly different.

However, the present study did reveal areas in which students felt safer than faculty members did. These areas were students feeling safe walking to and from school, gangs being a problem at school, and student vandalism of school property being a problem. In other words, faculty members did not think that students felt as safe walking to and from school as students reported. In contrast, The 2011 Baltimore City Public Schools School Climate Survey results indicated that faculty members thought that students felt safer walking to and from schools than students reported. The results of the present study indicated that students did not think that
gangs and student vandalism of school property were as problematic as faculty members reported. Robers et al. (2012) stated that gang activity in the schools affects the educational environment and “perception of school safety” (p. 36). The survey results from the Baltimore City Public Schools also indicated that students thought that gangs and student vandalism of school property was more problematic than faculty members reported. In other words, this study and the study of Baltimore City Public Schools produced contradicting results.

Males’ overall views of school safety were more positive than those of females among both faculty and students. When comparing male faculty members to female faculty members, males felt safer at school and didn’t think that physical or verbal abuse of teachers was as problematic as females reported. Male students’ views of school safety also were more positive than those of female students in nine statistically significant areas. One of these areas was feeling safe in school. However, in 2011, four percent of male students and four percent of female students reported feeling unsafe at school (Robers et al., 2013). Another area that was concluded as statistically significant between male students and female students in the present study was cyberbullying, which is a more recent issue addressed in literature. Female students viewed cyberbullying as more problematic than male students did. In recent years, a higher percentage of females than of males reported being victims of cyberbullying once or twice during the school year, but a higher percentage of males than of females reported being cyberbullying victims at least once or twice a month (Robers et al., 2013).

Male and female faculty members report two significantly different areas while male and female students report nine significantly different areas. This could be due to faculty members having been exposed to that specific school environment for a longer period of time than the students have. This could also be due to students being at an age where they are still socially and emotionally developing.

Limitations

Many limitations existed in this study. The first limitation was that data were collected in only one of the schools in the area. The second limitation was that high school seniors were the only students who completed the survey in a high school that consists of ninth grade through twelfth grade. The third limitation was that some respondents did not complete the demographics section of the survey, and this affected the statistical comparison between male and female responses. The fourth limitation was the respondent rate. The students (12th graders)
who participated in this study represented 74.8% of the 12th graders in the building and 18.2% of the total student population in the building; the faculty members who participated in this study represented 53.1% of the faculty members in the building.

Conclusion

This study revealed that although students and faculty members did not have significantly different overall perceptions of school safety, males and females did. Overall, males (students and faculty) had more positive views of school safety than females (students and faculty) did; this was consistent when responses were analyzed in further depth. Specifically, males (students and faculty) responded that physical and verbal abuse of teachers was more of an issue than females (students and faculty) reported. In addition, males (students and faculty) reported feeling safer at school than females (students and faculty) reported.

All members of the school community should feel safe in the school environment. Students should not have to worry about their safety while they are learning; educators should not have to worry about their safety while teaching. Schools are where educators and students spend most of their day, and it is important for them to feel safe and comfortable during that time. People should not have to fear victimization when in the school setting. Individuals should come forward if they have witnessed any type of violence; they are making the situation worse by not stopping it.

The National Association of School Psychologists’ “Best Practices for Creating Safe and Successful Schools” includes the following suggestions. Crisis training and plans should “[be] relevant to the school context, reinforce learning, make maximum use of existing staff resources, facilitate effective threat assessment, and [be] consistently reviewed and practiced” (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013, p. 1). Physical and psychological safety should be balanced in order to “avoid overly restrictive measure” and “combine reasonable physical security measures” (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). For example, having locked doors and monitored spaces instead of having armed guards enhances the school climates and encourages members of the school community to report potential threats (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). In addition, the context of the school and/or district should be considered when providing services that are most appropriate and culturally sensitive to its community (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). Finally, schools and their respective
communities should keep in mind that effective change takes time (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013).

**Implications for Practice**

School psychologists should collaborate with administrators in collecting and analyzing data in order to determine the strengths and risks of the school. From there, a problem-solving approach should be used to create, implement, and evaluate procedures and programs. Bullying programs have been shown to be effective in reducing and preventing victimizing behaviors in schools as well as creating a positive school climate. In order to reduce threat in the school environment, school psychologists should actively participate in and provide mental health services to threat assessment teams or crisis teams that also include school administrators and law enforcement officials. It would benefit the team for the school psychologist to assist in determining the type (direct, indirect, veil, conditions) and level (low, medium, high) of threat. In addition, school psychologists should collaborate with community resources (advocates, emergency responders, etc.) and routinely conduct research to ensure that appropriate measures be taken in times of need.

All school personnel should provide a visible, welcoming presence; this could be done through greeting students every morning or reminding students that school personnel are available to provide them with support or guide them to the appropriate resources. One of the most important implications that research provides is that well-established communication between home and school is essential for the well-being and safety of students, faculty members, the community, and the overall school environment.
References


Appendix A
Student “Opt Out” Form

SCHOOL SAFETY SURVEY
PARENTAL “OPT OUT” FORM

Our school is taking part in a school safety survey conducted by Marie Turnbull, M.S., a graduate student at Miami University (Ohio). This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Doris Bergen of Miami University (Ohio). We want your child’s opinion about what is happening in Fort Hill High School so we can better understand how safe our students feel in school. **Your child’s principal has approved this research to be conducted without signed parental consent.**

A survey containing 13 questions will be administered to your child during homeroom period. This survey is expected to take about 5 minutes to complete.

To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. Participants may skip questions if they feel that they cannot provide an answer. They may also turn in a blank survey if they decide to not participate.

The student survey contains a section that advises students to contact a faculty member or staff if they feel that they have been bullied or wish to speak to someone.

For questions about this research, please contact Marie Turnbull (turnbume@miamioh.edu) or her faculty advisor, Dr. Doris Bergen (bergend@miamioh.edu; 513-529-6622). For questions or concerns about the rights of research subjects or the voluntariness of this consent procedure, please contact the Research Compliance Office at Miami University (humansubjects@miamioh.edu; 513-529-3600).

**If you wish that your child not participate in this research study, please indicate below and return this form to Fort Hill High School.**

☐ I do not want my child to participate in the school safety study conducted by Marie Turnbull, M.S., a graduate student at Miami University (Ohio).

Name of Student (Printed): ________________________________

[Signature]

Parent/Guardian Signature                            Date
Appendix B
Faculty Member “Opt Out” Form

SCHOOL SAFETY SURVEY
FACULTY MEMBER “OPT OUT” FORM

Our school is taking part in a school safety survey conducted by Marie Turnbull, M.S., a graduate student at Miami University (Ohio). This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Doris Bergen of Miami University (Ohio). We want your opinion about what is happening in Fort Hill High School so we can better understand how safe our faculty/staff feels in school.

A survey containing 14 questions will be administered to you. This survey is expected to take about 5 minutes to complete.

To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. Participants may skip questions if they feel that they cannot provide an answer. They may also turn in a blank survey if they decide to not participate.

For questions about this research, please contact Marie Turnbull (turnbume@miamioh.edu) or her faculty advisor, Dr. Doris Bergen (bergend@miamioh.edu; 513-529-6622). For questions or concerns about the rights of research subjects or the voluntariness of this consent procedure, please contact the Research Compliance Office at Miami University (humansubjects@miamioh.edu; 513-529-3600).

If you wish to not participate in this research study, please indicate below and return this form to the main office.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the school safety study conducted by Marie Turnbull, M.S., a graduate student at Miami University (Ohio).

Name (Printed): ________________________________

Signature                                                      Date

22
SCHOOL SAFETY SURVEY FOR STUDENTS

We are conducting this study in order to better understand how safe students feel in school. We want your opinion about what is happening in your school so we can evaluate how safe you feel in your school. This survey has been adapted from the Baltimore City Schools School Climate Survey published in a study by Milam, et al., (2010). Your school administration has agreed that the study may be conducted in your school without signed parent consent. To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate in this study, please answer the following questions. You may skip questions if you feel you cannot provide an answer. You may also turn in a blank survey if you wish to not participate.

1. I feel safe at this school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. I feel safe going to and from school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. Student drug/alcohol abuse is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. Students possessing weapons like knives and guns is a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. Fire setting is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

6. Gangs are a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

7. Student vandalism of school property is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

8. Outsiders getting into my school is a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

9. Fighting among students is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

10. Students picking on other students is a problem at my school.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - I Don’t Know
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

11. Gangs are not a problem at my school.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - I Don’t Know
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

12. Physical or verbal abuse of teachers is a problem at my school.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - I Don’t Know
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
13. Student internet posting of hurtful information, threats, or exclusions about other students is not a problem at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I Don’t Know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The following are demographics we would like to know.

1. What is your gender?
   - □ Male
   - □ Female

2. What is your ethnic background?
   - □ Asian
   - □ African American
   - □ Hispanic
   - □ Native American
   - □ White (Non-Hispanic)
   - □ Other __________

3. What language is spoken in your home? Check all that apply. Circle the main language that is spoken in your home.
   - □ English
   - □ Spanish
   - □ Portuguese
   - □ Korean
   - □ Japanese
   - □ Mandarin
   - □ Arabic
   - □ Cantonese
   - □ Thai
   - □ Hindi
   - □ Other __________

4. How old are you?
   - A. 14-15 years old
   - B. 16-17 years old
   - C. 18 years old or older

5. In what grade are you?
   - A. 9th grade
   - B. 10th grade
   - C. 11th grade
   - D. 12th grade

***If you have been bullied and wish to speak someone, please contact a faculty member or staff member with whom you feel comforting talking.***

If you wish to provide any comments, please do so here.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

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Appendix D  
Faculty Member Survey

**SCHOOL SAFETY SURVEY FOR FACULTY MEMBERS**

We are conducting this study in order to better understand how safe students feel in school. We want your opinion about what is happening in your school so we can evaluate your perception of how safe students feel in school. This survey has been adapted from the Baltimore City Schools School Climate Survey published in a study by Milam, et al., (2010). This survey has been adapted from the Baltimore City Schools School Climate Survey published in a study by Milam, et al., (2010). Your school administration has agreed that the study may be conducted in your school. To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate in this study, please answer the following questions. You may skip questions if you feel you cannot provide an answer. You may also turn in a blank survey if you wish to not participate.

1. I feel safe at this school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. Students feel safe at this school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. Students feel safe going to and from school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. Student drug/alcohol abuse is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. Students possessing weapons like knives and guns is a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

6. Fire setting is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

7. Gangs are a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

8. Student vandalism of school property is not a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

9. Outsiders getting into my school is a problem at my school.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - I Don’t Know
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

10. Fighting among students is not a problem at my school.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - I Don’t Know
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

11. Students picking on other students is a problem at my school.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - I Don’t Know
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

12. Gangs are not a problem at my school.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - I Don’t Know
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
13. Physical or verbal abuse of teachers is a problem at my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I Don’t Know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. Student internet posting of hurtful information, threats, or exclusions about other students is not a problem at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I Don’t Know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The following are demographics we would like to know.

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your ethnic background?
   - Asian
   - African American
   - Hispanic
   - Native American
   - White (Non-Hispanic)
   - Other _______________

3. What language is spoken in your home?
   - English
   - Spanish
   - Portuguese
   - Korean
   - Japanese
   - Mandarin
   - Arabic
   - Cantonese
   - Thai
   - Hindi
   - Other _______________

6. Do you have any background in or substantial knowledge about school safety?
   A. Yes
   B. No

Please provide any comments you may have:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
## Appendix E

Faculty Members Compared to Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Members</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.2414</td>
<td>0.44620</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>79.1990</td>
<td>p &gt; .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.3215</td>
<td>0.54063</td>
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Appendix F
Faculty Members Compared to Students by Area

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Students feeling safe going to and from school</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.488</td>
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<td>4.316</td>
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<td>0.8180</td>
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<td>Students feeling safe going to and from school</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.146</td>
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<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.552</td>
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<td>Student vandalism of school property</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.683</td>
<td>1.0592</td>
<td>2.785</td>
<td>66.157</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td>3.209</td>
<td>1.0554</td>
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Appendix G
Males Compared to Females

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3.4938</td>
<td>0.53081</td>
<td>4.832</td>
<td>162.565</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3.1281</td>
<td>0.45194</td>
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## Appendix H
### Male Faculty Members Compared to Female Faculty Members

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<th>Participants</th>
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<td>Male Faculty Members</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.4249</td>
<td>0.44310</td>
<td>2.152</td>
<td>34.6980</td>
<td>$p &lt; .05$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Faculty Members</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.1168</td>
<td>0.42669</td>
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# Appendix I
Male Faculty Members Compared to Female Faculty Members by Area

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<td>Feeling safe at school</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.333</td>
<td>0.4851</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical or verbal abuse</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.889</td>
<td>0.7584</td>
<td>4.130</td>
<td>34.228</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of teachers</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.737</td>
<td>0.9335</td>
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## Appendix J

### Male Students Compared to Female Students

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>N</th>
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<td>Male Students</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.5126</td>
<td>0.55386</td>
<td>4.309</td>
<td>126.224</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
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<td>Female Students</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.1313</td>
<td>0.46189</td>
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### Appendix K

**Male Students Compared to Female Students by Area**

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<th>Area</th>
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<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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<th>df</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling safe at school</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.121</td>
<td>0.7945</td>
<td>2.711</td>
<td>130.406</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.731</td>
<td>0.8631</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>130.512</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling safe going to and from school</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.152</td>
<td>0.8273</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>130.512</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.836</td>
<td>0.7900</td>
<td>3.167</td>
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<td>p &lt; .01</td>
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<td>Gangs</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.788</td>
<td>0.9530</td>
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<td>124.222</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.313</td>
<td>0.7629</td>
<td>2.965</td>
<td>125.897</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student vandalism of school property</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.424</td>
<td>1.0086</td>
<td>2.350</td>
<td>130.714</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>1.0731</td>
<td>3.296</td>
<td>123.533</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting among students</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.092</td>
<td>1.1142</td>
<td>2.300</td>
<td>130.976</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.507</td>
<td>0.9108</td>
<td>3.296</td>
<td>123.533</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students picking on other students</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>2.894</td>
<td>1.2295</td>
<td>2.801</td>
<td>124.707</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>2.403</td>
<td>1.2316</td>
<td>2.217</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gangs (additional question)</td>
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<td>1.0667</td>
<td>2.801</td>
<td>124.707</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3.119</td>
<td>0.8620</td>
<td>2.217</td>
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<td>Physical or verbal abuse of teachers</td>
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<td>1.0761</td>
<td>2.965</td>
<td>125.897</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.194</td>
<td>1.2215</td>
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<td>125.897</td>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>1.0983</td>
<td>2.965</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.455</td>
<td>0.9951</td>
<td>2.965</td>
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