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PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN AN OKLAHOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT REGARDING A SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

CLIFTON T. FOOTE
Norman, Oklahoma
2000

UMI®

PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN AN OKLAHOMA
SCHOOL DISTRICT REGARDING A SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

Acknowledgements

The completion of this arduous task has brought with it a sense of renewal in my belief that the personal spirit is in a constant state of awakening to the influence of others.

I wish to thank the members of my committee. Michael Langenbach, who made himself available at any time to assist, advise, and refine this endeavor, deserves my ongoing gratitude. Sally Zepeda, who unfortunately left the University of Oklahoma during this writing process, refused to relinquish her commitment to this student and steadily maintained lines of communication and motivation between the University of Georgia and OU. She has achieved the delicate balance between a dedicated educator, quintessential student advocate and caring mentor. Courtney Vaughn's steady commitment to the task of enabling this student to achieve a successful completion was always heartwarming and encouraging. John Chiodo, as my "outside" person, became an active "insider" as he provided reasonable suggestions for improvement of my work. Mary John O'Hair, who served as committee chair, advised me to seek outside assistance, and therefore, was instrumental in my receiving the wise input of others.

The invaluable assistance of Dr. Jeffrey Maiden for statistical advice and consultation cannot go unmentioned, as well as the technical assistance of Mike Nelson. Trudy Rhodes' expertise in keyboarding skills helped to bring this paper to its final form. Thanks to all of you.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife, Susan, who has stood by me, encouraged me and assisted me throughout this entire process. Without her time, patience and confidence in me this accomplishment might not have come to fruition.

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ABSTRACT

The topic of school violence and its causes are at the forefront of educational issues today. The purpose of this study was to measure teachers' and administrators' perceptions of violence within a public school district in the Midwest United States.

This study used a survey instrument and quantitative analysis to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding a safe school environment. The instrument consisted of two scales. The items on the first scale of the questionnaire dealt with threats to school safety that related to gangs, drugs, assaults and other crimes. The second scale of the instrument addressed issues of possible or probable locations of sites of violence on campuses such as empty classrooms, halls, lunchrooms, and school grounds. The survey was sent to 125 randomly selected educators in a suburban school in the Midwest.

The research indicated that administrators and teachers do not perceive their schools as unsafe. Differences were found between administrators' and teachers' perceptions. The study found gender to be an issue in the perception of school safety and violence issues. In addition, the findings indicated that differences do exist in the perceptions of elementary teachers and secondary teachers in regard to a safe school environment. Data also showed little difference in the way more experienced and less experienced teachers and administrators regard their school as having a safe and non-violent environment. It is important to note that no variable was perceived to be a major problem by any of the participants.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Violence in schools is a worthy topic to explore. Are schools safe for students and teachers? After several incidents of violence in schools during the 1990s, school safety certainly warrants exploration. What the media would want the general public to think is that schools are not safe. However, research conducted indicates that schools are safe—safer than the communities in which they are located.

If we want schools to continue to be safe places, we must address violence in communities and families, first. Schools are not inherently unsafe, even though some violence occurs there. This is not to say that violence is not an issue to study as schools are places where large numbers of young people congregate— learning, socializing, and dealing with problems that they carry to school from their communities and families.

The topic of school violence, its causes, frequency, manifestations and methods of dealing with it, are at the forefront of educational issues today. However, while these facets of school violence are worthy of study, equally important are the perceptions of those professional educators who serve in today's schools. It is the purpose of this research to measure teachers' and administrators' perceptions of safety within a single public school district in the southwest United States.

Statement of the Problem

As schools react to the increase in the use of drugs, violent crimes, gangs and school shootings, some states have sought to address the problem through tougher policies and legislation. For example, the state of Oklahoma passed

legislation in 1996 to establish "Safe School Committees" in order to address school safety issues.

Teachers have an important role to play in the reduction of student violence in regard to school safety issues because they interact with students all day, everyday for nine months of the year. The attitudes and perceptions of teachers on issues such as school violence and school safety can be communicated both informally and formally to students. In addition, a teacher's perceptions of these issues may form the basis of how willing they are to deal with safety issues and in what forms their efforts may take in even further reducing violence and providing an even safer and more secure learning environment within their school.

Teachers' perceptions of violence and safety in schools can also impact the faculty and staff. If teachers and administrators perceive a school to be unsafe, then it is possible they might seek employment in a more secure and safe environment. Therefore, schools that are perceived as more violent may become educational wastelands as quality teachers and administrators exit in search of safer environments and work places.

Schools cannot effectively be made safer until perceptions of teachers and administrators are examined. These perceptions can serve as a benchmark for study in the process of improving school safety and can assist in creating more comprehensive and collaborative approaches to the resolution of the problems that can contribute to unsafe schools, thus reducing the haphazard approaches to dealing with school safety and violence.

Background

The National Center for Education Statistics released a report in March, 1998 entitled, <u>Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97</u>. The following statistics were reported:

1. Fifty-seven percent of public elementary and secondary school principals reported that one or more incidents of crime/violence that were reported to the police or other law enforcement officials had occurred in their school during the 1996-97 school year.

2. Ten percent of all public schools experienced one or more serious violent crimes (defined as murder, rape or other type of sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon, or robbery) that were reported to police or other law enforcement officials during the 1996-97 school year.

3. Physical attacks or fights without a weapon led the list of reported incidents for 1996-97. About 116,000 incidents of theft or larceny were reported along with 98,000 incidents of vandalism. These less serious or nonviolent crimes were more common than serious violent crimes, with schools reporting about 4,000 incidents of rape or other type of sexual battery, 7,000 robberies, and 11,000 incidents of physical attacks or fights in which weapons were used.

4. While 43 percent of public schools reported no incidents of crime in 1996-97, 37 percent reported from one to five crimes and about 20 percent reported six crimes or more.

5. Forty-five percent of elementary schools reported one or more violent incidents compared with 74 percent of middle and 77 percent of high schools.

6. Four percent of elementary schools reported one or more serious violent crimes compared with 19 percent of middle and 21 percent of high schools.

7. Of the less serious or nonviolent crimes, the largest ratios of crimes per 100,000 students were found in middle and high schools

compared with elementary schools. This was true for physical attacks or fights without a weapon, theft/larceny, and vandalism.

8. In general, elementary schools reported proportionately fewer incidents of serious violent crime. They reported lower rates of physical attacks or fights with a weapon and rape or other type of sexual battery when compared with middle schools and high schools. However, while elementary schools reported lower ratios of robbery compared with high schools, they were not significantly different from middle schools.

Overall, about 1,000 crimes per 100,000 students were reported in public schools, 950 of which were not serious or violent. The ratio of serious violent crime is lowest in elementary schools, with 13 violent crimes reported per 100,000 students compared with 93 violent crimes per 100,000 students in middle schools and 103 violent crimes per 100,000 students in high schools. The rate of serious crimes is fairly small when compared to the number of students— approximately 54 million—in public schools (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1998).

In recent years, concern about violence has resulted in a variety of approaches and responses to the problem. However, while there is no shortage of ways to attempt to deal with the issue of violence in our schools, one must question the effectiveness and validity of such measures. The question remains whether or not such measures actually help alleviate the problem of violence in our schools and if they are effective in the reduction of violent incidents.

In the Harvard Educational Review, Noguera (1995) addressed the question of whether strategies that schools adopt in response to problems, such as discipline problems which include violence, actually perpetuate the problem. The problem of violence cannot be overlooked. The public is demanding that

schools do something to prevent violence in our schools which seems to be a reflection of our society. Noguera (1995) stressed that schools may never be completely immune from violence and that we must understand why schools may be vulnerable.

In order to deal with the violence issue, schools have used a variety of measures such as metal detectors, zero tolerance polices that guarantee the automatic removal of students through such means as suspension and expulsion, and even the use of police officers and security guards to patrol and monitor student behavior within the school. Noguera (1995) suggested a variety of approaches that may appear to be nontraditional or innovative. Among these approaches are mentoring programs that pair students with an adult role model, conflict resolution programs that teach children to settle disputes in nonviolent ways, and curricula that teach children how to avoid violent situations. In addition, many schools have counseling programs that include programs in conflict resolution and group dynamics.

While some of these strategies have proven successful, most policies have favored the "get-tough" approach (Noguera, 1995). Many schools, out of fear of violence, have increased penalties for committing violent acts. Even though schools are expected to be safe places, what is it that causes them to be so vulnerable to the occurrence of violence?

Noguera (1995) indicated that discipline takes on greater importance because it serves as the primary means through which symbols of power and authority are perpetuated. The students' expulsion hearing is perhaps the greatest spectacle at which the meting out of punishment serves as a symbol of the power and authority of the school. Symbolism of this type can play heavily on interactions within schools and, ultimately, influence how schools and violence are perceived by others.

The role of the teacher cannot be overlooked in the process of eliminating violence. While many schools have police officers and security guards to enforce school rules and regulations, it is the teacher who still plays the most significant role because it is the teacher who makes the primary referral in most cases. The manner in which teachers handle situations in the classroom and halls, the influence teachers assert as they handle situations play a significant role in the effectiveness and prevention of violence. The teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward their students can lead to a situation in which violence becomes the norm. Noguera (1995) indicated, "When fear is at the center of student-teacher interactions, teaching becomes impossible, and concerns about safety and control take precedence over concerns about teaching"(p. 204). One might conclude that this concern leads to further rules, policies and regulations that may be implemented in a hasty manner and would only exacerbate the situation. Policies of coercion and excessive forms of control could be responsible for a school climate that only perpetuates even greater fear and acts of violence.

The solution, according to Noguera (1995), was to humanize school environments in order to reduce the potential for violence. Ways to humanize schools might include using community members instead of intimidating security guards or police officers, having adults serve as mentors for students, and involving students and teachers in activities that make it easier for them to relate to one another. These solutions may not be feasible for all schools. Noguera (1995) provided insight into how educators behave. The implication is that teachers' actions can be either effective or ineffective in the reduction of school violence, and behavior has great impact one way or the other.

Regardless of who is handling a situation that may involve violence or the potential for violence, the knowledge and experience of the individual is a factor.

In order to be effective in violence prevention, the training and experience of the person responding to the situation must become a priority. Many times, school officials leave untrained or inexperienced people in charge of handling highly volatile situations. This can be readily observed in almost any school where it is not uncommon to find a first-year teacher with little or no training on duty and responsible for supervising, single-handedly, hundreds of students.

School security is too important to be left to just anyone. In Hylton's (1996) opinion,

> The nation's schools would be far safer for everyone if school officials made a commitment to hire well-trained security officers—people who have learned their skills at police academies, for instance—and to fortify their training with the unique skills they need to function effectively in the school environment. (p. 45)

While this philosophy may contradict the concept of humanizing schools, it does make clear the important role of those who handle the situation and how the situation is handled. Because school districts are not only in the business of educating students, but also provide for the safety and well-being of their students, the importance of finding the right person for the job cannot be minimized.

The causes of violence in our schools vary considerably, but experts (e.g., Burnett & Gar, 1994; Hylton, 1996; Noguera, 1995) report three causes of increased violence in schools: gang presence and activity, hate-motivated behavior, and drugs.

<u>Gang Presence and Activity</u>: Gangs are organized groups whose distinctive language and dress identify their members. Even though only a small percentage of students belong to gangs (10 percent, according to Burnett & Gar, 1994), they impact schools because of their involvement in drugs and with weapons.

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Hate-Motivated Behavior: Hate is also a cause of violence in schools.

When hate groups target particular people in society at-large, they target those

same people in schools. And, in schools, those who suffer this hate-violence are

members of ethnic, racial, religious groups, as well as others whose sexual

orientation is different.

School populations are becoming increasingly diverse—ethnically and

racially. Moreover, the increasing economic hardship Americans are experiencing

has generated a backlash against immigrants. Without adequate knowledge

about these different populations, students simply fail to understand one

another. In school, this is manifested in name-calling, fighting, and acts with

direct ethnic, racial, or anti-Semitic overtones (Ordovensky,1993; Price & Everett,

1997).

Not only does homophobia permeate society at-large, but it also exists in

schools. Because differences based on sexual orientation are among the most

difficult for people to understand and accept, stereotypes and discriminatory

behavior aimed at gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are among the most difficult to

eliminate. As a result, homosexual students and adults face egregious name-

calling and violent behaviors directed at them, and few find access to

sympathetic support and guidance.

Schools mirror the general lack of respect for females in our society

(Stein, 1994). Harassment, bullying, date rape, and other forms of victimization

of girls are increasing. According to a Metlife Survey of American Teachers

(1997), 16 percent of girls indicated they were victims of a violent act in or

around school.

Drugs: In at least three ways, drugs can lead to violent behavior. The

first behavior involves drug sales. A bad sale or failure to pay for drugs can

produce a violent reaction. The second behavior involves the issue of turf. Schools where drugs are sold may be the turf of one gang or provider of drugs. Should another seller attempt to move in, violence may erupt. The third behavior involves student behavior which, when students are on drugs, may be violent or erratic.

The state of Oklahoma became a leader in dealing with the problem of violence and safety issues in its schools. Oklahoma was one of the first states to implement a statewide hot-line for students, teachers, and parents to report threats, weapons, or drug use in schools. The program provides a toll-free number to anonymously report incidents to a contracted service which, in turn, refers callers back to the school in the form of a written report that eventually leads to an investigation of the situation.

In 1996, the Oklahoma Legislature passed Safe School Legislation which:

1.   Directs each public school site to establish a Safe School Committee no later than October 1, 1996, and every year thereafter.

2.   Allows any school employee who is unable to work as the result of an assault or injury sustained while performing their assigned duties to be paid their full contract salary for the remainder of their contract year, school year or period, whichever is applicable.

3.   Allows school employees who suffer job-related injuries which qualify for temporary total disability benefits under the Worker's

Compensation Act to utilize accumulated sick leave or personal leave on a prorated basis under certain conditions.

The law requires that each school site committee be composed of at least six members, with teachers, students and parents being represented equally. The committee is assigned the task of making recommendations to the principal:

1. possible strategies for enabling students to avoid harm at school

2. student victimization

3. regarding unsafe conditions

4. crime prevention

5. school violence

6. other safety issues. (SB 1071, Sec. 1, of the 1996 Reg. Sess.)

Need for the Study

The study of Oklahoma public school educators' perceptions of current school safety is a timely subject due to a perception of increased violence in our schools. As recently as December 6, 1999, a shooting took place in a Ft. Gibson, Oklahoma middle school, which resulted in five students being injured. Much legislation has been a direct response to such acts of violence that have occurred in the past few years. The purpose of this study was to measure teachers' and administrators' perceptions of violence in a single Oklahoma school district. In an analysis of the 1993 Metlife survey of teachers' perceptions of and experiences with safety, most teachers felt safe and had not experienced violence (Price & Everett, 1997).

Principals tend to view violence as increasing, while teachers in general, report that they feel safe in their schools (Ceperley & Simon, 1994). In a 1999

study of five schools and a training university in Tennessee, it was found that practicing teachers had a lower perception of violence than pre-service teachers (Young & Craig, 1999). In a study of a Chicago Public School located in the Cabrini-Green Housing Project (perhaps the most socioeconomically disadvantaged housing project in Chicago), it was reported that 94 percent of the teachers sampled felt safe in their school (Spearman, 1993). In a study of the Hinds County Public School District in Mississippi, it was reported that years of experience, gender, certification, and race had no significant impact on school personnel's perceptions of safety (Duncan, 1995).

This study can, perhaps, provide information that may be useful in dealing with the problem of creating a safer and more secure atmosphere in schools. Thus, Oklahoma's students could pursue successful learning and the research prove useful for proactive planning for safer school environments in the future. These insights might provide a foundation for implementing an action plan which strategically facilitates the recognition of potential problems and the strategies for dealing with them.

The information gained from this research might provide a foundation and guide for establishing safe school committees as well as professional development seminars/instruction for staff members concerning the causes of school violence, indicators of at-risk behavior, and the prevention of school violence in order to provide safer and more secure environments for our schools, students, and employees.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' and administrators' perceptions about safety in a single Oklahoma school district. The extent to which Tranquility Public School (a pseudonym) teachers and administrators perceive their campuses and other school settings as safe and free of crime will

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be examined. Through the use of a survey instrument, answers will be sought from teachers and administrators to a number of research questions related to school safety.

Research Questions

1. Are there differences in the perceptions of teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

2. Are there differences in the perceptions of male and female teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

3. Are there differences in the perceptions of elementary and secondary school administrators and teachers with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

4. Are there differences in perceptions between more experienced and less experienced teachers and administrators in regard to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

Assumptions

1. The teachers and administrators responding to the survey will be honest about their perceptions and provide reliable and valid beliefs concerning the magnitude of the problem of school violence on their campus.

2. The teachers and administrators who respond to the survey will be informed about issues of school violence in their school.

3. The teachers and administrators who respond to the survey were representative of suburban teachers and administrators in the state of Oklahoma.

Definition of Terms

Assault—will refer to any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury upon the person of another, when coupled with an apparent present ability to do so, and any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm, constitutes assault (Black, 1968).

Crime—will refer to any act done in violation of these duties which an individual owes to the community, and for the breach of which the law has provided that the offender shall make satisfaction to the public. This includes vandalism, theft, robbery, assault, and rape (Black, 1968).

Factor—will refer to any circumstances or influence which brings about or contributes to a result such as a factor of production (Black, 1968).

Rape—will refer to unlawful sexual intercourse by force (Black, 1968).

Robbery—will refer to the felonious taking of property in the possession of another, from his person or immediate presence, and against his will accomplished by force or fear (Black, 1968).

Safety—will refer to what Abraham Maslow calls "freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos" (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 179).

Secondary—will refer to schools that house grades 7-12 within Tranquility Public Schools.

Elementary—will refer to schools that house grades pre-kindergarten through grade 6 within Tranquility Public Schools.

Participants—will refer to Tranquility Public Schools teachers and administrators.

Theft—will refer to taking personal property belonging to another without consent (Black, 1968).

Vandalism—will refer to such willful or malicious acts as are intended to damage or destroy property (Black, 1968).

Victim—will refer to the person who is the object of a crime or tort (Black, 1968).

Victimization—will refer to wrongful harm to an individual which involves assault, theft, robbery, rape and/or vandalism (Black, 1968).

Violence—will refer to all incidents of criminal activity involving force or the threat of force while at school or traveling to or from school (Black, 1968).

<u>Limitations of the Study</u>

1. The findings will be limited to Tranquility Public Schools.

2. The teachers and administrators may not be completely aware of the extent to which their campuses are safe and secure educational environments.

3. This study will be limited to randomly selected teachers and administrators of Tranquility Public Schools.

4. Data for this study was collected exclusively using a mailed survey.

<u>Summary</u>

School violence is not a new issue to the field of education. School violence has come to the forefront of educational topics due to a variety of reasons. While these reasons may vary from district to district, current thinking focuses on school violence as a paramount issue due largely to increased media focus on specific instances of violent occurrences in schools across the United States.

Schools in and of themselves are relatively safe places where students function in an educationally productive manner. However, school safety is a topic that should be addressed. Violence in schools can take many forms, but experts link three phenomena to safety in our schools. These phenomena are gang activity, hate-motivated behavior, and drugs.

In recent years, states have attempted to deal with the issue of school safety through legislation that mandates dealing with and confronting the problem. Oklahoma has been one of the states to take the lead in requiring

districts to work toward safer schools for students, staff and employees.

The focus of this research was directed at examining teachers' and administrators' perceptions of safety in a single suburban Oklahoma school district. The research obtained from this study might be helpful in assisting school personnel in future planning for a safer school atmosphere that embraces the concept of nonviolence.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 included a statement of the problem, background of the problem, the need for the study, the purpose for the study, the research questions which guided the study, the assumptions of the study, the definition of terms used in the study, and the limitations of the study. Chapter 2 provided a review of the relevant literature. This review included an overview of the literature pertaining to violence in schools, technology, and pro-social behavior. Chapter 3 discussed the methodology and the instrument used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 delineated the results of statistical tests performed on the data. The findings, conclusions, and implications of the study were presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Although school violence has been a major media concern in the United

States, the research in this area is rather limited. Many articles that deal with

this issue consist of essays and opinions that are culled from administrative

reports or newspaper accounts of incidents that involve violent situations. For

example, the article, "Saying the Unsaid: Girl Killing and the Curriculum," which

appeared in the Journal of Curriculum Development, (Perlstein, 1998) reported

violence in schools as a gender issue. Many of Perlstein's seventy-eight citations

came from magazine or newspaper articles.

> Violence in our schools is clearly on the increase. Problems that
> were once thought to exist only in large urban schools have now
> filtered down to the grade schools and in places considered to be
> safe rural areas. Broadly speaking, students who once lived in
> crime-ridden neighborhoods of some of our most troubled inner
> cities found their schools to be the safest places for them to be.
>
> There are approximately 50 million students attending some
> 108,000 public schools in this country, but fewer than one percent
> of adolescent homicides occur in or around these schools. This
> small number is almost certainly due to the fact that school officials
> in dangerous areas have installed metal detectors, surveillance
> cameras, and security guards in a prudent (and largely successful)
> attempt to prevent particularly violent or troubled youngsters from
> bringing weapons into the school. (Aronson, 2000, p. 4)

Over the last two years, six school shootings have taken place in our

nation. The results of these senseless acts have left 15 students, teachers, and

principals dead and 59 wounded (Daily Oklahoman, 1998). In spite of recent

occurrences of school violence, record-keeping on violent acts in the past is

almost non-existent and accurate numbers of violent incidents in our schools

nationwide or state-by-state is not readily available. Most information comes from national anti-violence organizations that accumulate information and statistics through surveys or questionnaires. Police and juvenile authorities keep records of violence, but these authorities do not separate the violence in the community from the violence in the schools. In addition, due to the fact that the majority of public school students are minors, privacy laws protect their identities.

This chapter examined violence in schools and key components of school violence prevention.

Violence in Schools

Theorists have hypothesized on the causes of violence in and out of schools. Curin and Mendeler (1997) stated that "The causes of ... violence are many: economic malaise; cynicism about the political process; drugs; gangs; the entertainment media; and the breakdown of the family" (p. 1). "Evidence suggests that violence in schools derives mainly from factors external to schools, but may be precipitated or aggravated by the school environment" (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998, p. 35).

Violent acts are often thought of as those that produced physical harm. However, many violence prevention curricula and programs extend the definitions of a violent act to include "verbal, visual, or physical acts intended to demean, harm, or infringe upon another's civil rights" (Kopka, 1997, pp.1-2). Within this definition, racial epithets, white supremacy symbols, or a hard shove in a school hallway are all considered violent acts. In addition, violence is school related "if it takes place on a school campus, on the way to or from school, or traveling to or from a school-sponsored event" (Kopka, 1997, p. 2).

One of theories on the cause of the tragedy in Jonesboro, Arkansas,

involved the issue of gender. Perlstein (1998) stated that, "Gender conflicts were at the heart of the Jonesboro tragedy. All four children and one teacher killed in Jonesboro, as well as nine of the 10 wounded were female. The accused killers, Mitchell Johnson and Drew Golden, were male" (p. 89).

In an incident in Pearl, Mississippi, Luke Woodham stabbed his mother to death and then killed his girlfriend as well as another girl at Pearl High School. In an incident in West Paducah, Kentucky, student Michael Carneal shot and killed three young women who had gathered for a prayer meeting at the school.

In Norwalk, California, Catherine Tran was shot and killed by her former sweetheart at Norwalk's John Glenn High School because she had broken up with him.

What is apparent in these incidents is that the victims were almost always female. Even in cases in which females are not the victims of school shootings, males are almost invariably the perpetrators (Perlstein, 1998). School officials tend to react to violent tragedies such as these by implementing more security procedures and plans while overlooking the role of gender in such situations. The schools of the nineties have become fortresses of security gates, metal detectors, and video surveillance cameras in response to the violence (Currin & Mendler, 1997; Kopka, 1997; & Quarles, 1993).

Fighting, bullying, and violent acts have been a part of public education for many years. However, the problem of violence has seemed to receive more attention from the public due to the increase in newspaper and television coverage. The increase seems to be attributable to many other factors as well. In a survey of school administrators, lack of parental involvement was cited by 50% of the respondents as a more important factor in school violence than social class, racial or ethnic tension, gangs, alcohol and drugs, or student transiency. "Those most likely to be involved in school violence are low-achieving students

(76 percent). Outsiders (34 percent) were considered to be the second most likely instigators" (Ordovensky, 1993, p. 20).

Some attribute aggressive and violent behavior to an abusive home or the decrease in two-parent families and the lack of father figures, while others cite such issues as racism, media violence, and poverty and unemployment as a precursor to school violence (Aronson, 2000; Elliott, Hamburg & Williams, 1998; Kopka, 1997).

There has been little research concerning adolescents' emotional responses to weapons in school, but many students have expressed opinions of school as a dangerous place. A nationwide survey of high school students reported that approximately 30% of males and 8% of females carried weapons to school (Martin, Sadowski, Cotton, & McCarraher, 1996).

In a study of African-American students in two middle schools in North Carolina, 447 students surveyed indicated that they experienced fear of personal harm in schools. Martin et al. (1996) reported that:

> ... 28% of the students believed that other students brought guns to school and 36% feared that another student would hurt or attack them at school. Fifteen percent reported school avoidance behavior while 5% avoided after school activities. Ten percent avoided places in school, 6% stayed home from school, and 20 percent of the students carried one or more weapons to school for self-protection. (p. 24)

This study concluded that:

> Many African-American middle school adolescents believed that other students bring guns to school and that these perceptions related positively to experiences of fear while at school and behaviors of school avoidance and the need to bring a weapon to school for self-protection. (Martin et al., 1996, p. 23)

In a study of minority junior high school students in New York City, it was found that one fifth of all respondents (N = 2005) reported that they had carried

a weapon to school (Vaughan, McArthy, Armstrong, Walter, Waterman, & Tiezzi, 1996). Ten percent of the respondents reported that they carried a knife, and five percent reported that they carried a gun. Thirteen percent of 11 year-olds perceived that their friends carried weapons (Vaughan et al., 1996, p. 571). The major implication of this study was that schools need to address the issue and begin to educate adolescents as early in their school experience as possible. In addition, preparation to deal with the problem of weapons in the school needs to be discussed and plans need to be implemented to deal with this problem.

While most people associate the problem of school violence and weapons in school with larger, inner-city schools, the problem of weapons in schools and its impact on the educational process is not unique to urban areas of the United States. In a study of rural Texas adolescents in the fall of 1994, 1,072 eighth and tenth grade, language arts students were sampled (Kingery, Pruitt, & Heuberger, 1996). The major source for the survey items came from an instrument originally devised in 1989 for use in the National Adolescent Student Health Survey (NASHS). The National Adolescent Student Health Survey provided a comprehensive investigation of the behavior, knowledge, and attitudes of American teens on health issues.

The results of the study indicated that the most common reason for carrying a handgun at school was student anger with someone and thinking about shooting that person. Nearly as common a response was the reason, "it made me feel safe," (p. 19). Students who carried a gun at school were more likely to have carried some other type of weapon such as a knife. These students were also more likely to be involved in repeated physical fighting such as fistfights than the non-carriers of weapons in the past year. Perhaps the most startling result of this report was that gun-carriers had a 589% higher risk of being attacked three or more times at school and 552% higher

risk outside of school supervision than those who did not carry a gun (Kingery et al., 1996, p. 19). The increase in risk of victimization for gun carriers was consistent with their increased likelihood of entering dangerous situations. Drug involvement was found to be higher in gun carriers when compared to students who did not carry guns. The gun-carriers were at least 13 times more likely than non-carriers to have used cocaine in any form in their lifetime and they were 17 times more likely to to be users of crack cocaine (Kingery et al., 1996, p. 21). It is clear that students who carry guns to school are more likely to be involved in other types of illegal or violent acts.

In a study of the New York City Public Schools, a self-administered questionnaire was given to a representative sample of ninth to twelfth grade students. The sampling frame included all academic, vocational, and alternative high schools. The schools were stratified by the presence (n=19) or absence (n=96) of a school-based metal detector program. This program consisted of security officers with hand-held metal detectors who scanned randomly selected students as they entered the building. Thirty-six percent of all ninth to twelfth grade students surveyed, reported being subjected to threats of physical harm. Twenty-one percent of the students surveyed reported carrying a weapon such as a knife, gun, or club one or more days during the thirty days preceding the survey. Rates for violent behaviors were substantially lower inside the school building than outside. Only 14.4% of students reported being threatened, and 12.5% of students reported carrying a weapon (Ginsberg, 1993).

Students from schools that have implemented a metal detector program (18% of students) were as likely as those who attended schools without metal detector programs to have carried a weapon anywhere (21.6% vs. 21.2%), but were less likely to have carried a weapon while inside the school building (7.8% vs. 13.8%), or going to and from school (7.75% vs. 15.2%) (Ginsberg, 1993).

As a result of this study, one can make the case for programs that are designed to reduce violence and address safety issues in schools. However, while many schools use metal detectors as part of a school-based violence prevention program, metal detectors are not a cure-all answer to the problem. Ginsberg's (1993) results indicated that metal detectors are effective in reduction, but not elimination, of weapons in schools. The findings pointed to the need for additional research and rigorous evaluation of the use of metal detector programs to determine the strengths and limitations of such practices. The problem of students becoming a victim of a crime such as robbery and physical assault has led to national concern. The problem has reached such proportions that one of the National Education Goals proposes that, "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (p. 216).

The National Crime Victimization Survey (1991) reported data that showed an estimated 2.7 million violent crimes take place annually either at school or near schools. About one in four public school teachers rated physical conflicts among students as a problem in their schools (Nolin, 1996).

A survey was conducted to identify the incidence of violence in schools and the extent of fear of violence at school in order to measure progress toward reaching the goal of drug and violence- free schools. The report dealt with the information reported by students in grades 6-12 on personal student victimization from a national survey conducted in the spring of 1993. Interviews from 6,504 students in grades 6-12 were conducted as part of the study. Victimization was defined as direct personal experience of threats or harm and expanded to include the knowledge of or witness of crime incidents of bullying at school. This broadened definition was used because the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth asserted that, "even youth who

are not direct victims of violence may be victimized by the chronic presence of violence in their communities" (p. 216). Three types of incidents were considered in this report: bullying (repeated threat of harm), any kind of physical attack, and robbery (taking something directly by force or threat of force).

The findings of this survey indicated that most students (71%) in grades 6-12 reported having knowledge of bullying, physical attack, or robbery at their school during the current school year. Fifty-six percent of the students reported that bullying had occurred in their schools, and was followed by physical attack (43%) and robbery (12%). About half of the students (56%) reported witnessing at least one incident of bullying, physical attack or robbery. Twenty-five percent of the students reported being worried about being victimized at school. One third of the students in grades 6-12 reported having witnessed a physical attack at school, and 1 of 10 students worried about being attacked while at school (Nolin, 1996).

Twelve percent of the students reported being directly and personally victimized at school during the current school year. Physical attack was reported by 4% of the students, while victimization by bullying was reported by 8%. Robbery, or having things taken by force or threat of force amounted to only 1% of the students reporting being victimized in this manner (Nolin, 1996).

The majority of research on school safety and violence in the schools deals primarily with the students' involvement or perceptions. In an article by Price and Everett (1997) entitled, "Teachers' Perceptions of Violence in the Public Schools: The Metlife Survey," the teachers' experience and perceptions of violence in U.S. public schools were addressed.

The most commonly perceived problems according to the teachers surveyed (Price & Everett, 1997) were pushing, shoving, grabbing, or slapping (28%), verbal insults (26%), and stealing (18%). Teachers also perceived that

3% of students carried weapons to school such as knives, pen-knives, and handguns. The teachers' perception was that violence was more likely to occur at the secondary level, in urban schools, and in schools comprised of predominantly minority students. The majority of the 1000 teachers who were respondents in this study (77%) reported that they felt safe at school. Eleven percent reported being a victim of a violent act. Only 1% of the teachers reported feeling not very safe or not at all safe when at school.

When teachers were asked which group of students they perceived as most likely to be victimized by a violent incident, they reported that students from low-income families (22%) and students from racial or ethnic minorities (15%) were more likely to be victimized. It was also the perception of 10% of those who participated in the survey that strict teachers were most likely to be victims of violence. Violence, according to those surveyed, had a pronounced effect on students and teachers in the school setting. One in four teachers perceived that violence, or the threat of violence, discouraged school attendance and participation by both students and teachers. Perhaps one of the most interesting statistics in the report was that 86% of respondents perceived that efforts to address violence in the schools are adequate (Price & Everett, 1997).

<u>Prevention of School Violence</u>

When addressing the issue of prevention of violence in schools and providing for school safety, one cannot overlook the importance of school policies and their effect on violence. The policies that work for one school may not be effective or practical in another setting. However, policies are needed to provide general guidance and set expectations for safety. In recent years, there have been many policies established by school boards to address the issue of safety. The following issues are examined regarding school violence prevention: school

uniforms, technology, pro-social behavior, and building a caring school and community culture.

One current trend is to establish policies that require uniform dress for all students. In a study conducted on the effects of student uniforms on attendance, behavior problems, substance use, and academic achievement, it was found that, contrary to what one might expect, student uniforms had no direct effect on substance use, behavioral problems, or attendance. However, there was a negative effect of uniforms on student academic achievement (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 1998).

The study was conducted using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, to test the relationship of uniforms on substance use, behavioral problems, attendance, and academic achievement. The National Educational Longitudinal Study is a national stratified random sample of schools and students that began in 1988 with eighth grade students. There were three follow-up studies, the most recent study published in 1994, that reported data on the original eighth graders in their second year of post-secondary education.

Although uniforms may not have the generally expected effect that is anticipated by most people, wearing school uniforms may still have an indirect effect on the school environment. Further research in this area is needed to examine other effects of school uniforms in relation to school safety.

<u>Technology</u>

In addition to the study of uniforms, the use of technology in the prevention of violence in an attempt to provide a safe and secure environment has been explored. Because violence is an ongoing concern, the search for new and better ways to provide for violence prevention should also be an ongoing process. While the cost of technology may seem excessive, it could well be cost

effective when one considers the expense of litigation if the school is held responsible for any incidents that could have been prevented.

Metal detectors may appear to be expensive to purchase, and they require personnel to run them. In addition, they drastically increase the amount of time required for students to enter the building. However, they are believed to be effective at detecting knives and guns that are brought to school (Gilbert, 1996).

Other forms of technology that may be of assistance range from the telephone to computers. While the telephone is not considered a new technological device, the fact is that they are now more accessible especially cellular phones. Districts must be able to make 911 calls if they are to provide a safe and secure campus (Townley & Martinez, 1995). Two-way radios may serve a similar function as the telephone.

The use of computers should not be overlooked as a technological tool in the implementation of school safety. A computer program can provide a student data base for the administration and could include information on suspensions and expulsions. Furthermore, a modem could link the user to the district office or to law enforcement agencies (Townley & Martinez, 1995).

Other forms of new technology that might prove helpful are digitized cameras, scanners and video cameras that allow photos and information to be sent to administrators or law enforcement officials. Video cameras also provide a means of surveillance for problem areas. Innovations in technology may come at a high price, but they become cost effective when one considers the safety and well-being of students.

<u>Pro-social Behavior</u>

While there is a plethora of behaviors that describe pro-social skills, the term 'pro-social behavior' is best defined as "voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals" (Eisenberg &

Mussen, 1989, p. 3). Pro-social behaviors are defined in terms of their intended consequences for others; they are performed voluntarily rather than under duress (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 4).

If public opinion demands that schools be charged with the responsibility of preparing students both academically and socially, then educators are faced with the problem of teaching behaviors that have historically been taught in the home. The students who are deemed our responsibility vary in degrees of academic ability and social skills as well. They are individuals who are different at the time they start school due to their genetic backgrounds as well as early family experiences (Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998). The effects of schools' influence on the students' social behavior has received very little systematic attention in studies on school effectiveness over the last fifteen years. However, the evidence is sufficient to indicate that schools do exert an effect even though much needs to be learned about how that effect operates and the circumstances under which it is most likely to make a difference (Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998).

American educators have stated for many years that moral education is one of their primary objectives. This "moral education has traditionally been restricted to the teaching of virtues such as kindness, consideration, and generosity and inculcating prohibitions against stealing, lying and cheating" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 97).

Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) stated that, "Teacher modeling of pro-social conduct in naturalistic classroom settings has not been systematically investigated" (p. 97). However, educators can take the lead as role models in encouraging and promoting pro-social behavior for their students. The teacher can model behaviors such as kindness and consideration, as well as use techniques of more developmental discipline:

Classroom management designed to develop children's intrinsic motivation for academic excellence, as well as pro-social values, including self-control and commitment to rules and values; warm teacher-child relationships, discussion of general moral principles, and student participation in decision-making are emphasized. (Eisenberg & Mussen, p.101)

In addition, educators can devise cooperative learning projects, highlight pro-social action in literature and in everyday life, and augment pupils' empathy through discussions of needs and feelings (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Schools need to be more assertive in their response to low level antisocial behavior such as put-downs, bullying, and harassment.

There are currently over 200 different approaches to the management of student aggression believed to exist in American schools today. Yet, the effectiveness of these approaches and their success in the reduction of violence and the promotion of pro-social behavior is largely unmeasured or unknown (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997).

Caring School and Community Culture

The culture of a school arises from a network of shared ideologies and beliefs that tie people together. Schools cannot become caring communities unless caring is valued and unless norms are created that point the way toward caring, reward caring behaviors, and frown on non-caring behaviors (Sergiovanni, 1994). "In these times when neighborhoods are less communal than in the past, explicit efforts to build community are needed to keep students connected to education and connected to their futures" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 146). These connections can be made through communication between parents and teachers working toward the goal of safer and more secure learning environments. A schoolwide culture that is supportive of positive learning and a safe educational environment is critical. The professional school community should reach out to businesses and other community partners to create safer

schools as well as communities. Parental involvement is crucial to the process of creating safe schools.

The attitudes, expectations, and behaviors that students and teachers carry from other settings into the school, as well as their immediate experiences within the school, can contaminate the school setting. Concern about violence within a school may reduce the quality of teaching, disrupt classroom discipline, and limit teachers' availability to students before or after the school day. This same concern may also reduce students' motivation to attend school, willingness to participate in extracurricular activities, and the capacity to attend to and care about academics (Elliott, Hamburg & Williams, 1998, p. 295).

Solid research on the effects of different strategies to reduce violence is sparse. However, coordinated school and community efforts seem promising. It seems clear that the best way to reduce youth violence within schools is by creating an atmosphere that encourages students to focus their energies on learning (Crews & Counts, 1997, p. 133). While the solution to the problem of school violence may not have one simple answer and research may be sparse, Kopka (1997) provides fifteen solutions offered by researchers, educators, and violence-prevention experts that will help prevent violent behavior both inside and outside the school. They are:

1. Teach children conflict-resolution skills as early as possible.

2. Ban handguns.

3. Promote responsibility in the media to produce nonviolent television programs, films, and rock videos.

4. Promote responsible children's television programming that addresses such issues as conflict resolution.

5. Invest money and programs in communities at risk for violence.

6. Start a national day-care program that includes parent education.

7. Allow schools to serve as neighborhood centers for evening classes in parenting, family-living skills, job training, and adult education, in collaboration with social agencies and service organizations.

8. Create more jobs and vocational programs for youth.

9. Coordinate communication among youth, parents, schools, police, and communities.

10. Keep schools small so teachers can devote more time to each student.

11. Permanently separate the habitual, violent offenders from the general school population.

12. Establish violence prevention as a long-term priority in school districts.

13. Include violence prevention as part of school-based health services.

14. Evaluate programs and other interventions implemented in each school.

15. Volunteer time in the schools and in the communities acting as a supportive, positive role model for children. (pp. 29-30)

Schools and communities are becoming more aware of the seriousness of school safety and policies and strategies are being developed to deal with the problem. Traditionally, problem students have been dealt with through suspension or expulsion. One must question if removal of a student is an effective means of changing behavior. The severity of violent incidents over the past few years has forced schools to become more innovative in approaches to dealing with student behavior. The safety of students and the building of safe and secure schools do not happen by chance. Collaboration and support of students, staff, parents, and community are needed. Sound polices and practices needed to create safer schools do not necessarily cost a great deal of

money. "Ten Steps to Safer Schools," an article by Stephens (1998) included the following low-cost or cost-free measures to make schools safer and more secure:

1. Include safety in your district's mission statement.

2. Craft individual safe school plans.

3. Develop written agreement with other youth-serving agencies.

4. Establish crisis-management policies that include staff training.

5. Exercise full custodial responsibility.

6. Share information among schools and staff members about dangerous conditions or people.

7. Conduct annual school safety site assessments.

8. Screen new employees.

9. Evaluate employees and remove those who are incompetent or pose a risk to children.

10. Stay in touch with students. (pp. 30-33)

Summary

The results of this review of the literature on school violence issues suggest that there are many different strategies for dealing with the prevention of violence and providing for safe and secure school environments. Research further shows that what may appear to be a solution to the problem may not be applicable to all situations. Constraints are placed on a particular environment due to a multitude of factors including, but not limited to, cost. A school district's commitment to the problem and the quality and training of the people involved are central to this issue. A good starting point for developing an action plan would be the identification of educators' perceptions, both individually and

collectively, as to the safety and security of his/her respective environment. Each district should evaluate its own needs and assess the effectiveness of programs that have been implemented. Further research in this area is warranted and would be helpful to school administrators, strategic planners, and policy makers as well as teachers.

CHAPTER 3

Design of the Study

<u>Method</u>

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' and administrators' perceptions about safety in a single Oklahoma school district. The researcher addressed the following research questions by utilizing a survey that was administered to randomly selected administrators and teachers:

1. Are there differences in the perceptions of teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in school Tranquility Public Schools?

2. Are there differences in the perceptions of male and female teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

3. Are there differences in the perceptions of elementary and secondary school teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

4. Are there differences in perceptions between more experienced and less experienced teachers and administrators in regard to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

<u>Sample</u>

Tranquility Public Schools was selected for this study because it is a suburban school with a diverse student population. The student population of 15,412 is located close to a major city in Oklahoma. Tranquility Public Schools has experienced an influx of students from other areas as students move out of the urban area to avoid problems associated with the inner city such as gangs

and drugs. Several districts were considered for this study, but Tranquility was selected because of its student enrollment and its proximity to a large urban area.

The district is located in a community that has a population of 80,500. The major employers in the area are the military and an automobile plant. The socioeconomic status of the students is varied with 45% of students qualifying for the free and/or reduced lunch and breakfast programs. District-wide student enrollment ethnicity for the 1998-1999 school year was: 64.1% Caucasian, 24.1% Black, 5.9% Native American, 3.5% Hispanic, and 2.4% Asian.

The certified staff consists of 1180 educators with an average of thirteen years experience. The district consists of twenty-seven school sites which include: three high schools, five junior high schools, 17 elementary schools, one vocational school, and one special services center.

Prior to the random selection of classroom teachers and administrators, the researcher presented the instrument to one of the assistant superintendents for review. At that meeting, an informal discussion was conducted regarding his perceptions regarding school safety and violence. He related that, in his opinion, fighting had been an ongoing problem in the schools, but seemed to have lessened recently. He stated that the district had discovered a few weapons on its campuses, but no firearms. He made it clear that there was a "zero tolerance" policy on firearms. According to the assistant superintendent, the district has made a conscious effort to prepare for crisis management in that they participated in numerous staff development sessions, involved local law enforcement agencies as well as other social service groups with school personnel in training, provided walkie-talkies to all administrators in the district, and installed security cameras on secondary campuses. Admittedly, he said, there were many who were nervous and concerned, but probably without

foundation. He felt that the participants would respond by finding their workplaces to be generally safe and secure. One area of concern that he shared was the younger children who were just beginning school. He related that children in his school district are starting school with aggressive behaviors which he had not seen in the past. He asserted that some proactive measures need to be initiated by the schools that involve the parents with parenting skills and anger management.

The sample for this study was drawn from a Tranquility Public Schools Personnel Directory that listed teachers' and administrators' names and building sites. Questionnaires were sent to 125 educators. This number included administrators and classroom teachers who were randomly selected from the school district. Random selection was used to ensure the validity of the study. Data from all teachers and administrators who responded to the questionnaire were included in the results. The sample for this study included administrators and teachers at every level (K – 12) within Tranquility Public Schools.

<u>Procedures</u>

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Assistant Superintendent of Tranquility Public Schools. The survey was sent to the selected subjects through inter-school mail. An accompanying letter was sent with the survey describing the study, methods, voluntary participation, benefits/risks and confidentiality. In addition, a letter from the assistant superintendent was included to stress the importance of participation and to encourage a higher response rate. Color-coded surveys were used to differentiate between elementary teachers (pink) and secondary teachers (purple). Yellow surveys were used to designate administrators' surveys.

<u>Instrumentation</u>

A modified survey instrument used in the Beaumont Independent School

District, Beaumont, Texas regarding a safe school environment was used with the author's permission (Appendix B, Letter of Permission). The instrument contained items used to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding a safe school environment. The instrument consisted of two scales (see Appendix C). The eleven items on the first scale of the questionnaire dealt with threats to school safety that related to gangs, drugs, assaults, and other crimes. The second scale of the instrument addressed nine issues regarding locations such as empty classrooms, halls, lunchrooms, and school grounds.

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, a commonly used method of computing internal consistency, was used to determine the reliability of the two scales. Reliability coefficients vary between values of zero and 1.00, with 1.00 indicating perfect reliability, and .00 indicating no reliability. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha for the threats of school violence scale was .9096 while the locations of sites of violence on campuses scale was .9394 with both indicating high reliability (Powell, 1996).

Subjects responded to each of twenty statements that were pertinent to their perceptions of school violence. A four-point scale was used that ranged from (1) "very unsafe" to (4) "very safe" or from (1) "not serious" to (4) "very serious." The values of the respondents were summed across the 20 safe school environment items to scale scores with lower values indicating a greater perception of a safe school environment. The survey also includes background and demographic questions.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed data obtained from the survey instrument using the appropriate statistical tests and procedures as described by Shavelson, (1996). Analysis on an item-by-item basis was conducted to determine the

degree of agreement on each statement within the administrator group and within the teacher group. Data analysis was accomplished with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package.

Data from the questionnaire provided descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics. These statistics included standard descriptive information such as means and standard deviations as well as inferential measures such as analysis of variance. The inferential statistics were used to evaluate the survey data for the purpose of answering each of the four research questions. Two-way analysis of variance was utilized to test mean differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of a safe school environment. Specific findings were highlighted through the use of summary tables.

Summary

A study was conducted through the use of a survey instrument to measure how Tranquility Public Schools teachers and administrators perceive their campuses as safe and free of violence. The survey was sent to randomly selected teachers and administrators at the elementary and secondary levels. The survey provided data such as descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), as well as inferential statistics such as analysis of variance. Two-way analysis of variance was used to test mean differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of a safe school environment.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Data

This chapter details the procedures for analyzing the collected data along with the statistical findings. Included are tests of reliability, appropriate tables and the data derived from each question in the survey.

A test was performed to assess the reliability of the instrument. Internal consistency of Safety at School items and Problems at School items was strong. For Safety at School, Cronbach's Alpha = .93 and for Problems at School, Cronbach's Alpha = .90. Analysis of the data was performed by using a series of 2 x 2 ANOVA'S to investigate main effects as well as interactions between the grouping variables. This analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

One set of analyses included all participants that returned surveys. Differences were investigated based on whether participants worked at a secondary school or an elementary school. This included a gender by school site (secondary or elementary) ANOVA and years of experience (less than 16 years or 16 or more years) by site ANOVA.

Analyses were conducted on the whole sample to see if there were differences between all teachers and all administrators. A Gender by Job (teacher or administrator) ANOVA was conducted, but the years of experience by job (teacher or administrator) ANOVA was not run because of a low cell size.

Another set of analyses investigated differences among teachers with the administrators removed. A Gender by teaching assignment (secondary or elementary) ANOVA and a Years of Experience (less than 16 years or 16 or more years) by teaching assignment ANOVA were tested.

Homogeneity of variance was tested with Levene's Test using $p < .05$ for rejection of the null hypothesis. In instances when the null was rejected, the

variance of the largest and smallest cell sizes were compared. When larger variance is associated with the smaller cell size, the F test is liberal, increasing the probability of a Type I error. In those situations, a more stringent p value of .01 was used for determining the statistical significance of the F test (Stevens, 1990; Tibachnick & Fidell, 1996).

The researcher sent questionnaires to 125 educators (teachers and administrators). Seventy-four of the 125 questionnaires (59.2%) were returned. The items on the survey instrument dealing with responses to safety were divided into two groups and are summarized below for ease of interpretation:

School Threats	School Safety Locations
1. Gangs	Respondent's classroom
2. Drugs	Empty classrooms
3 Intruders	Halls/stairs
4. Verbal Threats	Lunchroom
5. Assault	Restrooms
6. Sexual Assault	Teacher lounges
7. Destruction of School Property	Locker Room & Gym
8. Theft of School Property	Parking Lot
9. Theft of Personal Property	School Grounds/Outside
10.Weapons	

The analyses of the findings are divided into the same respective groups, the first dealing with school problems and the second dealing with school safety.

An examination of Table 1 shows the mean scores for the threats at school by gender and by school site. While no sub-group (e.g., elementary males, secondary females) perceived their schools to be unsafe, there are some patterns in the numbers worth noting. The mean scores revealed that secondary teachers have greater concern for gangs (males = 2.00; females = 2.05) and drug use (males = 2.28; females = 2.88) than elementary teachers. Elementary teachers perceived theft of school property (males = 2.25; females = 2.18) and theft of personal property (males = 2.25; females = 2.18) as their greatest

concerns. Both elementary (males = 2.13; females = 2.21) and secondary
(males = 2.11; females = 2.59) educators expressed limited anxiety about
vandalism. In regard to weapons, secondary teachers expressed more concern
(males = 1.56; females = 1.82) than elementary teachers irrespective of gender.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Threat Items by Gender and School Site (N = 72)

	Gangs	Drug Use	Intruders	Threats	Assault	Sex Assault	Vandalism	S. Theft	P. Theft	Weapons
Male										
Elementary (n = 8)										
M	1.38	1.19	1.75	1.88	1.50	1.25	2.13	2.25	2.25	1.25
SD	.52	.37	.71	.64	.53	.46	.64	.71	.71	.46
Secondary (n = 9)										
M	2.00	2.28	1.33	1.89	1.44	1.22	2.11	1.78	1.78	1.56
SD	.71	.71	.50	.60	.53	.44	.60	.67	.83	.53
Female										
Elementary (n = 38)										
M	1.31	1.26	1.66	1.92	1.46	1.21	2.21	2.18	2.18	1.36
SD	.52	.44	.71	.74	.64	.47	.66	.72	.85	.71
Secondary (n = 17)										
M	2.05	2.88	1.82	2.5	1.82	1.41	2.59	2.41	2.35	1.82
SD	.75	.67	.95	.71	.64	.51	.80	.62	.61	.73

Table 2 portrays the results of the ANOVA analysis of threats at school by gender and school site. The findings indicated that the perceived threats of gangs, drug use, and weapons were statistically significant in regard to school site. The analysis of variance of gangs indicated a statistical significance ($F_{(1, 68)} = 16.22$, $p < .05$). The data revealed that there was a finding of significance in the problem area of drug use ($F_{(1, 68)} = 80.507$, $p < .05$). When gender and the perception of drug use was analyzed, there was a significant statistical significance ($F_{(1, 68)} = 4.95$, $p < .05$). The data also indicated that weapons were statistically significant ($F_{(1, 68)} = 4.10$, $p .05$) in regard to school site.

These findings do not represent any issues that schools are not already addressing. In 1997, Price and Everett reported nationally that "pushing," "shoving," and "stealing" were problematic in schools. Since the small sample size of this study reported concern over "weapons," technology (metal detectors) could, perhaps, be used to scan students as they enter the building. Although technology may not be infallible in detecting all weapons, their presence could assuage fears.

TABLE 2

Results of ANOVA on Threats at School by Gender and School Site, (N = 72)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Gangs				
School	16.22	1, 68	.000	.19
Gender	.00	1, 68	ns	
School x Gender	.14	1, 68	ns	
Drug Use				
School	80.507	1, 68	.000	.54
Gender	4.95	1, 68	.03	.07
School x Gender	3.13	1, 68	ns	
Intruders				
School	.35	1, 68	ns	
Gender	.87	1, 68	ns	
School x Gender	1.86	1, 68	ns	
Verbal Threats				
School	2.38	1, 68	ns	
Gender	2.94	1, 68	ns	
School x Gender	2.17	1, 68	ns	
Assault				
School	.77	1, 68	ns	
Gender	.95	1, 68	ns	
School x Gender	1.4	1, 68	ns	
Sexual Assault				
School	.44	1, 68	ns	
Gender	.29	1, 68	ns	
School x Gender	.76	1, 68	ns	
Vandalism				
School	.91	1, 68	ns	
Gender	2.07	1, 68	ns	
School x Gender	1.05	1, 68	ns	

Table 2 (cont.)

Theft of School Property

School	.38	1, 68	*ns*	
Gender	2.08	1, 68	*ns*	
School x Gender	3.25	1, 68	*ns*	

Theft of Personal Property

School	.45	1, 68	*ns*	
Gender	1.28	1, 68	*ns*	
School x Gender	2.1	1, 68	*ns*	

Weapons

School	4.10	1, 68	.05	.06
Gender	.98	1, 68	*ns*	
School x Gender	.18	1, 68	*ns*	

Table 3 depicts the mean and standard deviation for each school threat item according to years of experience and by school site. No sub-group of the population sample identified any item as a serious problem at their school sites. The greatest area of concern for gangs was found to be at the secondary level with secondary teachers who have more than 16 years experience (mean = 2.20). The perception of the threat of drug use was highest at the secondary level. However, it was highest among teachers with less than 16 years experience (mean = 2.81. Verbal threats were also the greatest concern of secondary teachers with less than 16 years experience (mean = 2.36). In the area of weapons, the highest concern was at the secondary level among teachers with 16 years or more experience (mean = 1.73).

The findings (gangs and drugs) are supported in the literature (Burnett & Gar, 1994; Hylton, 1996; Noguera, 1995). The interrelated nature of gang activity and drugs as a safety issue is not a surprising finding at the secondary level where students enjoy more freedom (transportation, open campuses).

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Threat Items by Years of Experience and School Site (N = 74)

	Gangs	Drug Use	Intruders	Threats	Assault	Sex Assault	Vandalism	S. Theft	P. Theft	Weapons
Elementary										
Less than 16 yrs. (n = 22)										
M	1.27	1.20	1.66	1.95	1.55	1.27	2.14	2.18	2.27	1.36
SD	.45	.45	.73	.79	.67	.46	.77	.80	.82	..66
16 or more yrs. (n = 26)										
M	1.35	1.31	1.65	1.92	1.42	1.15	2.27	2.23	2.12	1.35
SD	.56	.43	.69	.69	.58	.46	.53	.65	.82	.69
Secondary										
Less than 16 yrs. (n = 11)										
M	1.81	2.81	1.81	2.36	1.54	1.27	2.54	2.27	2.27	1.72
SD	.75	.84	.87	.67	.52	.47	.68	.90	.79	.78
16 or more yrs. (n = 15)										
M	2.20	2.57	1.53	2.27	1.80	1.40	2.33	2.13	2.07	1.73
SD	.68	.65	.83	.80	.68	.51	.82	.51	.70	.59

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Table 4 portrays the results of ANOVA analysis for threats at school by years' experience and by school site. Gangs, drug use, verbal threats and weapons were areas of concern for educators. The analysis shows that the perception of gangs (F (1, 70) = 23.37, p < .05) and Perception of drug use (F 1, 70) = 109.03, p < .01) were statistically significant. Verbal threats (F (1, 70) = 4.29, p < .05) and the perceived threat of violence involving weapons were also statistically significant in school site comparisons, irrespective of years of experience (F (1, 70) = 5.09, p < .05.)

TABLE 4

Results of ANOVA on Threats at School by Years of Experience and School Site (N = 74)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Gangs				
School	23.37	1, 70	.000	.25
Years	2.47	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.14	1, 70	*ns*	
Drug Use				
School	109.03	1, 70	.000	.61
Years	.29	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.66	1, 70	*ns*	
Intruders				
School	.01	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.63	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.53	1, 70	*ns*	
Verbal Threats				
School	4.29	1, 70	.04	.06
Years	.13	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.03	1, 70	*ns*	
Assault				
School	1.53	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.19	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.53	1, 70	*ns*	

Table 4 (cont.)

Sexual Assault				
School	1.13	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.001	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.13	1, 70	*ns*	
Vandalism				
School	1.92	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.05	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.02	1, 70	*ns*	
Theft of School Property				
School	.00	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.07	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.29	1, 70	*ns*	
Theft of Personal Property				
School	.02	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.87	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.02	1, 70	*ns*	
Weapons				
School	5.09	1, 70	.03	.07
Years	.001	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.005	1, 70	*ns*	

The findings in Table 5 show teachers expressed a small degree of concern about four of ten problems: vandalism (male =2.27; female = 2.38), theft of school property (male = 2.18; females = 2.31), and theft of personal property (males = 2.09; females = 2.32). Female teachers reported some concern about threats (mean = 2.06). Administrators generally believed that their campuses were safe. Only two of ten perceived threats were seen as more significant by administrators than teachers.

The findings are consistent with national trends regarding concerns of

vandalism and theft of school property (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). With a small degree of concern for vandalism and theft, attention should be diverted from these areas to more significant concerns such as weapons identification.

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Threat Items by Job and Gender (N = 74)

	Gangs	Drug Use	Intruders	Threats	Assault	Sex Assault	Vandalism	S. Theft	P. Theft	Weapons
Teacher										
Male (n = 11)										
M	1.81	1.77	1.45	1.91	1.45	1.27	2.27	2.18	2.09	1.36
SD	.60	.81	.69	.54	.52	.47	.46	.75	.83	.50
Female (n = 47)										
M	1.55	1.69	1.80	2.06	1.61	1.29	2.38	2.31	2.32	1.57
SD	.69	.88	.81	.79	.64	.51	.74	.73	.78	.77
Administrator										
Male (n = 6)										
M	1.50	1.75	1.67	1.83	1.50	1.17	1.83	1.67	1.83	1.50
SD	.84	.82	.52	.75	.55	.41	.75	.52	.75	.55
Female (n = 10)										
M	1.4	1.95	1.20	2.20	1.30	1.10	1.90	1.80	1.70	1.10
SD	.70	1.07	.42	.79	.67	.32	.57	.42	.67	.32

Data on threats at school by gender and job (administrator or teacher) is found in Table 6. The two areas where differences were found were vandalism and theft of school property. Vandalism was statistically significant F (1, 70) = 4.76, p < .05. Theft of school property was also statistically significant F (1, 70) = 6.03, p < .05. There were no other statistically significant findings.

TABLE 6

Results of ANOVA on Threats at School by Gender and Job (Administrator or Teacher) (N = 74)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Gangs				
Job	1.23	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.74	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.15	1, 70	*ns*	
Drug Use				
Job	18	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.05	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.26	1, 70	*ns*	
Intruders				
Job	.76	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.07	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	3.29	1, 70	*ns*	
Verbal Threats				
Job	.02	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	1.25	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.21	1, 70	*ns*	
Assault				
Job	.50	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.01	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.89	1, 70	*ns*	

Table 6 (cont.)

Sexual Assault

Job	1.08	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.02	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.10	1, 70	*ns*	

Vandalism

Job	4.76	1, 70	.03	.06
Gender	.18	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.01	1, 70	*ns*	

Theft of School Property

Job	6.03	1, 70	.02	.08
Gender	.41	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.00	1, 70	*ns*	

Theft of Personal Property

Job	3.38	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.04	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.57	1, 70	*ns*	

Weapons

Job	.65	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.20	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	2.13	1, 70	*ns*	

The data in Table 7 suggests that the teachers had slightly higher levels of concern about school safety than the administrators did. The data indicates that female secondary teachers expressed limited concern in all threat areas except sexual assault (mean = 1.62). Female elementary teachers reported slightly elevated levels of concern in two areas: vandalism (mean = 2.21) and theft of school property (mean = 2.15). Male secondary teachers reported limited concern about gangs (mean = 2.00), drug use (mean = 2.25), and vandalism (mean = 2.33). Male elementary teachers' scores suggested mild levels of concern about threats (mean = 2.00), vandalism (mean = 2.20), theft of school property (mean = 2.60), and theft of personal property (mean = 2.60).

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Threat Items by Teaching Assignment and Gender (N = 58)

	Gangs	Drug Use	Intruders	Threats	Assault	Sex Assault	Vandalism	S. Theft	P. Theft	Weapons
Male										
Secondary (n = 6)										
M	2.00	2.25	1.17	1.83	1.33	1.17	2.33	1.83	1.67	1.50
SD	.63	.76	.41	.41	.51	.41	.52	.75	.82	.55
Elementary (n = 5)										
M	1.60	1.20	1.80	2.00	1.60	1.40	2.20	2.60	2.60	1.20
SD	.54	.45	.84	.71	.54	.55	.45	.55	..55	.45
Female										
Secondary (n = 13)										
M	2.23	2.81	2.08	2.61	2.00	1.62	2.85	2.77	2.54	2.23
SD	.73	.75	.95	.65	.58	.65	.69	60	.78	.83
Elementary (n = 34)										
M	1.29	1.30	1.70	1.85	1.47	1.18	2.21	2.15	1.24	1.32
SD	.46	.45	.72	.74	.61	.38	.69	.70	.78	.59

Data in Table 8 reflects the results of ANOVA analysis of teachers' perceptions by teaching assignment and gender. Teacher perceptions of gangs were found to be statistically significant $F_{(1, 54)} = 12.31$, $p < .05$. Additionally, teachers' perceptions of threats from drug use ($F_{(1, 54)} = 44.99$, $p < .01$) were statistically significant. When the perception of theft of school property was analyzed with assignment and gender, there was a statistically significant finding, $F_{(1, 54)} = 8.95$, $p < .05$. The data shows that theft of personal property, analyzed with assignment x gender was statistically significant, $F_{(1, 54)} = 5.48$, $p < .05$. Perception of weapons was also statistically significant, $F_{(1, 54)} = 7.55$, $p < .05$.

TABLE 8

Results of ANOVA on Threats at School by Teaching Assignment and Gender (N = 58)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Gangs				
Assignment	12.31	1, 54	.001	.19
Gender	.04	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	1.99	1, 54	*ns*	
Drug Use				
Assignment	44.99	1, 54	.000	.45
Gender	2.59	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	1.63	1, 54	*ns*	
Intruders				
Assignment	.23	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	2.31	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	3.64	1, 54	*ns*	
Verbal Threats				
Assignment	1.55	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	1.76	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	3.77	1, 54	*ns*	

Table 8 (cont.)

Assault

Assignment	.41	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	1.73	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	3.81	1, 54	*ns*	

Sexual Assault

Assignment	.40	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.48	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	4.28	1, 54	*ns*	

Vandalism

Assignment	2.92	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	1.31	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	1.26	1, 54	*ns*	

Theft of School Property

Assignment	.10	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	1.08	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	8.95	1, 54	.004	.14

Theft of Personal Property

Assignment	1.42	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.92	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	5.48	1, 54	.02	.09

Weapons

Assignment	7.55	1, 54	.008	.12
Gender	3.78	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	1.91	1, 54	*ns*	

Perlstein's (1998) observations about females being more susceptible to violence are worth exploring in relation to the findings in this study. However, the elevated nature of females feeling at-risk, in general, is not significant in this study in itself, because in society women have historically been more vulnerable to violence (Perlstein, 1998). Given these findings, the Tranquility Public Schools

might consider several options, such as providing escorts for female teachers leaving the school after hours and equally distributing the mix of male and female supervisory duties in the lunchroom, hallway, and other areas that are heavily populated during the day. Moreover, administrators need to shift practices of assigning females to isolated areas in the schools.

Table 9 portrays results from ANOVA analysis of teachers' perceptions of the threat items according to teacher assignment and years of experience. Secondary teachers, regardless of experience level, expressed mild levels of concern in the following areas: gangs, drug use, threats, vandalism, theft of school property, and theft of personal property. The more experienced secondary teachers (16 years or more) reported some concern about weapons (mean = 2.10). Elementary teachers, regardless of experience, expressed mild levels of concern in the areas of vandalism, theft of school property, and theft of personal property.

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Threat Items by Teaching Assignment and Years Experience (N = 57)

	Gangs	Drug Use	Intruders	Threats	Assault	Sex Assault	Vandalism	S. Theft	P. Theft	Weapons
Less than 16										
Secondary (n = 9)										
M	2.00	2.72	1.89	2.33	1.67	1.33	2.78	2.44	2.33	1.89
SD	.71	.91	.93	.71	.50	.50	.44	.88	.86	.78
Elementary (n = 21)										
M	1.27	1.20	1.67	1.95	1.55	1.27	2.14	2.18	2.27	1.36
SD	.46	.45	.73	.79	.67	.46	.77	.80	.82	.66
16 or more years										
Secondary (n = 10)										
M	2.30	2.55	1.70	2.40	1.90	1.60	2.60	2.50	2.20	2.10
SD	.67	.69	.95	.70	.74	.70	.84	.71	.92	.88
Elementary (n = 17)										
M	1.41	1.32	1.76	1.76	1.41	1.12	2.29	2.33	2.29	1.24
SD	.51	.43	.75	.66	.51	.33	.50	.62	.69	.44

Table 10 data indicates perceptions of teachers based on teaching

assignment and years of experience. Statistical significance was discovered in

teachers' perceptions of gangs as a threat (F (1, 53) = 26.95, p < .05), drug use

(F (1, 53) = 71.31, p < .01), verbal threats (F (1, 53) = 6.20, p < .05),

vandalism (F (1, 53) = 6.38, p < .0), and weapons F (1, 53) = 13.82, p < .05.

TABLE 10

Results of ANOVA on Threats at School by Teaching Assignment and Years
Experience (N = 57)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Gangs				
Assignment	26.95	1, 53	.000	.33
Years	1.99	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.27	1, 53	*ns*	
Drug Use				
Assignment	71.31	1, 53	.000	.57
Years	2.59	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	1.63	1, 53	*ns*	
Intruders				
Assignment	1.19	1, 53	*ns*	
Years	.04	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.40	1, 53	*ns*	
Verbal Threats				
Assignment	6.20	1, 53	.02	.10
Years	.09	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.40	1, 53	*ns*	
Assault				
Assignment	3.11	1, 53	*ns*	
Years	.08	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	1.13	1, 53	*ns*	

Table 10 (cont.)
_____

Sexual Assault

Assignment	4.03	1, 53	*ns*	
Years	.17	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	2.43	1, 53	*ns*	

Vandalism

Assignment	6.38	1, 53	.01	.11
Years	.00	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.80	1, 53	*ns*	

Theft of School Property

Assignment	1.64	1, 53	*ns*	
Years	.07	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.00	1, 53	*ns*	

Theft of Personal Property

Assignment	.05	1, 53	*ns*	
Years	.06	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.12	1, 53	*ns*	

Weapons

Assignment	13.82	1, 53	.000	.20
Years	.05	1, 53	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.82	1, 53	*ns*	

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According to the results depicted in Table 11, educators generally believed that their schools were "fairly safe." The narrow range of mean values (3.29 to 3.95) suggests that teachers feel quite safe in the many different environments found in schools.

The teachers and administrators believed that their schools were safe. This finding supports Hyman, Weiler, Perone, Romano, Britton, and Shanock's (1997) data that suggests:

> ... that (1) the public's perception of the extent of school crime is an overestimation of reality; (2) this overconcern results from conservative, "law-and-order" politicians' scare tactics supporting calls for "get-tough"

policies—a technique historically used to earn votes and remain in power; (3) these tactics are aided and abetted by the media; (4) distorted perceptions of the extent and severity of school violence encourage educators to reject research and practice demonstrating the success of well-run and well-supported prevention and treatment programs; and (5) the ensuing atmosphere encourages only punitive approaches, which in most cases create rather than cure student violence, alienation, and disruption. (p. 427)

Table 11

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Safety Location Items by Gender and School Site (N = 73)

	Class	Empty Class	Hall/Stairs	Lunchroom	Restroom	Lounge	Gym	Parking Lot	Outside
Male									
Elementary (n = 8)									
M	3.75	3.75	3.63	3.88	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.75	3.63
SD	.46	.46	.52	.35	.46	.46	.53	.46	.52
Secondary. (n = 9)									
M	3.67	3.77	3.56	3.44	3.44	3.89	3.33	3.33	3.33
SD	.50	.44	.73	.73	.53	.33	.71	.71	.71
Female									
Elementary (n = 39)									
M	3.69	3.67	3.79	3.72	3.79	3.95	3.72	3.56	3.64
SD	.73	.48	.41	.60	.41	.22	.46	.50	.49
Secondary (n = 17)									
M	3.60	3.47	3.41	3.56	3.47	3.76	3.33	3.29	3.53
SD	.63	.72	.71	.51	.72	.44	.72	.69	.51

Table 12 provides the results from the ANOVA analysis of the safety of various locations at schools by gender and by school site. The results indicate secondary personnel perceived parking lots to be a greater safety hazard than did elementary personnel, F (1, 69) = 4.49, p < .05.

TABLE 12

Results of ANOVA on Safety Locations at School by Gender and School Site (N = 73)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Classroom While Teaching				
School	.21	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.10	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.00	1, 69	*ns*	
Empty Classroom				
School	.31	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	1.65	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.54	1, 69	*ns*	
Hallways and Stairs				
School	2.14	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.01	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	1.03	1, 69	*ns*	
Student Lunchroom				
School	3.14	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.01	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.69	1, 69	*ns*	
Student Restroom				
School	4.66	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.06	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.00	1, 69	*ns*	
Teachers Lounge				
School	.06	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.16	1, 69	*ns*	

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School x Gender	3.06	1, 69	*ns*	

Table 12 (cont.)

Gym

School	2.92	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.46	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.46	1, 69	*ns*	

Parking Lot

School	4.49	1, 69	.04	.06
Gender	.48	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.21	1, 69	*ns*	

School Grounds *

School	1.83	1, 69	*ns*	
Gender	.51	1, 69	*ns*	
School x Gender	.37	1, 69	*ns*	

Table 13 offers descriptive statistics that portray teacher and administrator perceptions of safety in various locations in schools. The range of means (3.14 to 4.00) reflects that teachers, regardless of experience or teaching assignment, feel safe in schools.

Table 13

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Safety Location Items in School Site by Years Experience (N = 74)

	Class	Empty Class	Hall/Stairs	Lunchroom	Restroom	Lounge	Gym	Parking Lot	Outside
Elementary									
Less than 16 yrs (n = 22)									
M	3.86	3.77	3.82	3.82	3.86	4.00	3.73	3.63	3.77
SD	.35	.43	.39	.39	.35	.00			
.46	.49	.43							
16 or more yrs. (n = 26)									
M	3.6	3.62	3.73	3.69	3.73	3.85	3.65	3.58	3.54
SD	.86	.50	.45	.68	.45	.37	.49	.50	..51
Secondary									
Less than 16 yrs (n = 11)									
M	3.85	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.64	3.73	3.60	3.36	3.55
SD	.52	.69	.52	.52	.50	.47	.52	.67	.52
16 or more yrs. (n = 15)									
M	3.69	3.60	3.40	3.50	3.33	3.87	3.14	3.27	3.40
SD	.63	.63	.83	.65	.72	.35	.77	.70	.63

As Table 14 indicates, there were two statistically significant areas in this analysis of safety location items by years of experience and school site. The two areas that were found to be statistically significant were the gym, F (1, 70) = 5.33, p < .05 and the parking lot F (1, 70) = 4.30, p < .05.

TABLE 14

Results of ANOVA on Safety Locations at School by Years of Experience and School Site (N = 74)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Classroom While Teaching				
School	.39	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.19	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.79	1, 70	*ns*	
Empty Classoom				
School	.84	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.15	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.64	1, 70	*ns*	
Hallways and Stairs				
School	5.10	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.76	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.05	1, 70	*ns*	
Student Lunchroom				
School	2.63	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.36	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.08	1, 70	*ns*	
Student Restrooms				
School	6.43	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	3.13	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.48	1, 70	*ns*	

Table 14 (cont.)

Teachers Lounge

School	2.53	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	.008	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	3.42	1, 70	*ns*	

Gym

School	5.33	1, 70	.02	.07
Years	3.68	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	1.93	1, 70	*ns*	

Parking Lot

School	4.30	1, 70	.04	.06
Years	.31	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.02	1, 70	*ns*	

School Grounds

School	2.08	1, 70	*ns*	
Years	2.24	1, 70	*ns*	
School x Years	.12	1, 70	*ns*	

Data depicted in Table 15 shows teachers and administrators, regardless of gender, feel safe in all identified environments within schools. Female administrators, without exception, rated the teacher's classroom and the lounge "very safe."

Table 15

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Safety Location Items by Gender and Job (N = 74)

	Class	Empty Class	Hall/Stairs	Lunchroom	Restroom	Lounge	Gym	Parking Lot	Outside
Teacher									
Male (n = 11)									
M	3.73	3.82	3.64	3.64	3.63	3.82	3.55	3.55	3.55
SD	.47	.40	.67	.67	.50	.40	.69	.69	.69
Female (n = 47)									
M	3.62	3.55	3.66	3.64	3.70	3.87	3.59	3.45	3.57
SD	.74	.58	.52	.61	.51	.34	.54	.58	.50
Administrator									
Male (n = 6)									
M	3.67	3.67	3.50	3.67	3.50	3.83	3.17	3.50	3.33
SD	.52	.52	.55	.52	.55	.41	.41	.55	.52
Female (n = 10)									
M	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.89	3.70	4.00	3.78	3.60	3.70
SD	.00	.32	.63	.33	.67	.00	.67	.52	.48

The data from Table 16 describes educators' perceptions of safety location items at school by gender and job (administrator or teacher). Only one safety location area, the parking lot, demonstrated significant statistical difference, F (1, 70) = .08, p <.05. This test suggests teachers perceive the parking lot as a problematic area.

TABLE 16

Results of ANOVA on Safety Locations at School by Gender and Job (N = 74) (Administrator or Teacher)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Classroom While Teaching				
Job	.61	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.29	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	1.16	1, 70	*ns*	
Empty Classroom				
Job	.36	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.01	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	2.36	1, 70	*ns*	
Hallways and Stairs				
Job	.00	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.87	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.64	1, 70	*ns*	
Student Lunchroom				
Job	.59	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.37	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.36	1, 70	*ns*	
Student Restroom				
Job	.18	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	.65	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.17	1, 70	*ns*	

Table 16 (cont.)

Teachers Lounge

Job	.48	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	1.17	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.30	1, 70	*ns*	

Gym

Job	.28	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	3.33	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	2.54	1, 70	*ns*	

Parking Lot

Job	.08	1, 70	.02	.08
Gender	.00	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	.30	1, 70	*ns*	

Outside School Grounds

Job	.07	1, 70	*ns*	
Gender	1.47	1, 70	*ns*	
Job x Gender	1.07	1, 70	*ns*	

The data in Table 17 indicates that male, secondary teachers reported a stronger perception of safety at school than the female, secondary teachers did. The male, elementary teachers reported slightly higher perception of safety in 5 locations; the classroom, an empty classroom, the hall/stairs, the lunchroom, and the parking lot. The female, elementary teachers reported slightly higher perceptions for the restroom, the lounge, the gym, and the outside.

Table 17

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Safety Location Items by Gender and Teaching Assignment (N = 58)

	Class	Empty Class	Hall/Stairs	Lunchroom	Restroom	Lounge	Gym	Parking Lot	Outside
Male									
Secondary (n = 6)									
M	3.67	3.83	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.83	3.50	3.33	3.50
SD	.52	.41	.84	.84	.55	.41	.84	.82	.84
Elementary (n = 5)									
M	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.60	3.80	3.60
SD	.45	.45	.45	.45	.45	.45	.55	.45	.55
Female									
Secondary (n = 13)									
M	3.31	3.23	3.31	3.38	3.38	3.69	3.25	3.08	3.31
SD	.95	.73	.63	.51	.65	.48	.62	.64	.48
Elementary (n = 34)									
M	3.74	3.67	3.79	3.74	3.82	3.94	3.71	3.59	3.68
SD	.62	.47	.41	.62	.39	.24	.46	.50	.47

Table 18 contains data on safety location items at school by teaching assignment (elementary or secondary) by gender. The only area to be found statistically significant was the parking lot (F (1, 54) = 6.32, p < .05). No other areas had any statistically significant scores.

TABLE 18

Results of ANOVA on Safety Locations at School by Teaching Assignment and Gender (N = 58)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Classroom While Teaching				
Assignment	1.41	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.80	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.39	1, 54	*ns*	
Empty Classroom				
Assignment	1.26	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	3.91	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	1.70	1, 54	*ns*	
Hallways and Stairs				
Assignment	4.83	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.31	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.27	1, 54	*ns*	
Student Lunchroom				
Assignment	2.42	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.19	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.02	1, 54	*ns*	
Student Restroom				
Assignment	5.06	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.08	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.18	1, 54	*ns*	

Table 18 (cont.)

Teachers Lounge
Assignment	.84	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.00	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	1.4	1, 54	*ns*	

Gym
Assignment	2.13	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.14	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.88	1, 54	*ns*	

Parking Lot
Assignment	6.32	1, 54	.02	.11
Gender	1.4	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.01	1, 54	*ns*	

Outside School Grounds
Assignment	168	1, 54	*ns*	
Gender	.10	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Gender	.55	1, 54	*ns*	

The data in Table 19 provide additional support for teachers' perception that their schools are reasonably safe. The elementary teachers with less than 16 years of experience all perceived the lounge as being "very safe" (mean = 4.00). Secondary teachers with less than 16 years of experience felt less safe in every location than the elementary teachers with less than 16 years of experience. However, secondary teachers still perceived every location higher than fairly safe.

Table 19

Means, Standard Deviations, Cell Size for School Safety Location Items by Years Experience and Teaching Assignment (N = 58)

	Class	Empty Class	Hall/Stairs	Lunchroom	Restroom	Lounge	Gym	Parking Lot	Outside
Less than 16 yrs.									
Secondary (n = 9)									
M	3.44	3.44	3.44	3.44	3.56	3.67	3.50	3.22	3.44
SD	.53	.73	.53	.53	.53	.50	.53	.67	.53
Elementary (n = 22)									
M	3.86	3.77	3.82	3.82	3.86	4.00	3.73	3.64	3.77
SD	.35	.43	.39	.39	.35	.00	.46	.49	.43
16 or more yrs.									
Secondary (n = 10)									
M	3.40	3.40	3.30	3.40	3.30	3.80	3.20	3.10	3.30
SD	1.08	.70	.82	.70	.67	.42	.79	.74	.67
Elementary (n = 17)									
M	3.59	3.59	3.76	3.64	3.76	3.82	3.64	3.59	3.53
SD	.80	.51	.44	.79	.44	.39	.49	.51	.51

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The data presented in Table 20 deals with safety locations of perceived threats at school by teaching assignment (elementary or secondary) and by years of experience. An analysis of the data indicates four areas of statistical significance. The findings show hallways/stairs, $F(1, 54) = 8.21$, $p < .01$, students' restrooms $F(1, 54) = 8.54$, $p < .01$, gym $F(1, 54) = 4.62$, $p < .05$, and parking lot $F(1, 54) = 7.89$, $p < .05$ were significant in regard to teaching assignment.

TABLE 20

Results of ANOVA on Safety Locations at School by Teaching Assignment and Years Experience (N = 58)

Item	F	df	p	effect size
Classroom While Teaching				
Assignment	2.49	1, 54	*ns*	
Years	.69	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.36	1, 54	*ns*	
Empty Classroom				
Assignment	2.75	1, 54	*ns*	
Years	.54	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.20	1, 54	*ns*	
Hallways and Stairs				
Assignment	8.21	1, 54	.006	.13
Years	.46	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.10	1, 54	*ns*	
Student Lunchroom				
Assignment	3.34	1, 54	*ns*	
Years	.40	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.14	1, 54	*ns*	

Table 20 (cont.)

Student Restroom

Assignment	8.54	1, 54	.005	.14
Years	1.80	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.35	1, 54	*ns*	

Teachers Lounge

Assignment	3.59	1, 54	*ns*	
Years	.05	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	2.71	1, 54	*ns*	

Gym

Assignment	4.62	1, 54	.04	.08
Years	1.47	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.49	1, 54	*ns*	

Parking Lot

Assignment	7.89	1, 54	.007	.13
Years	.28	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.05	1, 54	*ns*	

Outside School Grounds

Assignment	3.69	1, 54	*ns*	
Years	1.79	1, 54	*ns*	
Assignment x Years	.12	1, 54	*ns*	

Summary

This chapter presented the significant results of a series of 2 x 2 ANOVA'S that investigated the main effects as well as interactions between the variables. Analyses were done on the whole sample to examine differences between all teachers and administrators. An ANOVA was also conducted on gender by job (teacher or administrator). In addition, a gender by teaching assignment (secondary or elementary) ANOVA and a years of experience (less than 16 years or 16 or more years) by teaching assignment ANOVA were tested.

A summary of the study, discussion of findings, conclusions, and implications for further study will be included in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

This research explored teachers' and administrators' perceptions of school

safety in a suburban school in the Midwest.   The extent to which the teachers

and administrators perceived their campuses and other school settings as being

safe from violence and free of crime was ascertained through the use of a survey

instrument (see Appendix C). Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the

schools within Tranquility School District are safe. Data revealed that there were

some differences between safety and such variables as gender and grade level.

These differences were insignificant and it is easy to concede with certainty that

schools are safe. Moreover, the perceptions that schools are violent are

predicted through sensationalism in news coverage.

The study was exploratory in nature due to the limited number of

participants in a single school district. Constraints were placed on the study by

the district—data could only be collected during Spring, 1999, and the number of

teachers and administrators who could be contacted were limited by the

Assistant Superintendent of Tranquility Public Schools. However, the data did

answer whether there were differences between the way teachers and

administrators perceived their campuses in regard to violence and safety issues.

The following research questions directed this study:

1.   Are there differences in the perceptions of teachers and

       administrators with respect to a safe school environment in

       Tranquility Public Schools?

2.   Are there differences in the perceptions of male and female

       teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school

environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

3.   Are there differences in the perceptions of elementary and secondary school teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

4.   Are there differences in perceptions between more experienced and less experienced teachers and administrators in regards to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

Discussion

The data suggests that both teachers and administrators in the Tranquility Public Schools perceived their schools to be safe. No extreme values that might indicate serious safety issues were reported. The following narrative discusses the data relevant to each of the research questions.

Are there differences in the perceptions of teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

In the National Center for Educational Statistics' report, "Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-1997," 1,234 public schools were surveyed through the use of a questionnaire to be answered by the school principals. Nationally nearly half of the schools reported that none of the crimes listed on the survey had occurred at their school during the 1996-1997 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998, p.7).

Overall, administrators perceived drug use, threats, vandalism, and theft of personal property as the most serious threats to school safety. Teachers perceived vandalism, theft of school property, and theft of personal property as the most serious school safety problems.

The ANOVA analysis revealed statistical significance for vandalism ($F_{(1, 70)} = 4.76$, $p < .05$) and theft of school property ($F_{(1, 70)} = 6.03$, $p < .05$).

For these two threat items, the position of the participant (e. g., administrator or teacher) was an important factor in the difference of the population means. Teachers had a higher perception for these threat areas. While it cannot be determined with certainty from the data, this finding could lend support to Quarles' (1993) conclusion that some administrators experience denial concerning safety issues in their buildings.

Neither the administrators nor the teachers identified any specific location within schools as having safety concerns.

Results of ANOVA analysis revealed only one statistically significant finding for a perception of a safety location: the parking lot, $F (1, 69) = .08$, $p < .05$. The difference between the mean scores of teachers and administrators for the parking lot was small. The job held by the participant was, however, an important factor in the difference of these population means.

Are there differences in the perceptions of male and female teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

When the data from all participants (administrators and teachers) were examined, little difference was discovered between the perceptions of males and females concerning school safety. However, when the data from the teachers by themselves were examined, gender was found to be a factor in the perception of safety at schools. Among elementary teachers, males reported slightly higher concerns about school safety than the female teachers did. However, among secondary teachers, female teachers reported much stronger concern about school safety than their male counterparts. On the basis of gender alone, ANOVA analysis revealed no statistically significant results.

The researcher discovered that, among elementary teachers, females reported higher perceptions of threat to school safety from drug use, vandalism,

and weapons. Previous researchers (e.g., Curwin & Mendler, 1997; Elliot, Hamburg & Williams, 1998; Kopka, 1997) have addressed these issues as causes of school violence and issues of school safety. At the secondary level, females reported higher perceptions of threat to school safety in every category. The difference between females and males in secondary schools was particularly pronounced concerning intruders. Moreover, secondary male teachers perceived a lesser threat for sexual assault than their female counterparts. All secondary teachers perceived that gangs, drugs, threats, and vandalism as potential threats to school safety. ANOVA analysis revealed only one statistically significant finding. The analysis of data from both administrators and teachers suggested that gender was an important factor in the perception of drug use ($F(1, 68) = 4.95$, $p < .05$) as a threat to school safety.

Are there differences in the perceptions of elementary and secondary teachers and administrators with respect to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

In general, secondary teachers and administrators perceived a higher threat to school safety than did elementary teachers and administrators. The data suggests that elementary teachers reported some concern in the areas of vandalism, theft of school property, and theft of personal property. The National Center for Education Statistics report "Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools; 1996-97" reported 274 incidents of theft or larceny and 234 incidents of vandalism per 100,000 students in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, p.11). In addition to vandalism and theft of both school and personal property, secondary teachers also reported concern about gangs, drug use, and threats.

ANOVA analysis indicated a statistically significant finding for gangs ($F(1, 70) = 23.37$, $p < .05$), drug use ($F(1, 70) = 109.03$, $p < .01$), verbal

threats (F (1, 70) = 4.29, p < .05), and weapons (F (1, 70) = 5.09, p < .05). This result indicates that the differences in the mean scores could be attributed to whether a participant was an elementary educator or a secondary educator. Secondary teachers had higher mean scores for each threat except personal threat.

When queried about locations within schools, elementary administrators and teachers did not identify any areas where they felt unsafe. Secondary administrators and teachers also gave each location positive ratings. However, the secondary educators expressed minor concern about the gym and the parking lot. When the teachers' responses were examined apart from those of the administrators, the results were the same. The elementary teachers identified only the parking lot as a location for concern. The more experienced elementary teachers reported mild concern about the outside. The secondary teachers expressed minor concern about the gym and the parking lot. More experienced secondary teachers reported mild concern about the restroom.

When an ANOVA was run on the data for Teaching Assignment, there was a statistically significant finding for the parking lot (F (1, 70) = 4.30, p < .05) and the gym (F (1, 70) = 5.33, p. < .05). The differences in the mean scores can be explained by the level of school (e. g., elementary or secondary) at which the participant was assigned. Elementary teachers and administrators had higher means indicating they perceived these areas as safer than secondary teachers and administrators.

The findings of this study in regard to the perceptions of elementary versus secondary educators are supported by statistics from the U. S. Department of Education. The National Center for Education Statistics Report of March 1998 entitled "Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97" states that the research found a smaller percentage of elementary

schools than middle schools or high schools reported that any crime occurred during the 1996-97 school year. Forty-five percent of all elementary schools reported at least one crime, while 74% of middle schools, and 77% of high schools did so (National Center for Education Statistics Report, 1998, p. 8).

Are there differences in perceptions between more experienced and less experienced teachers and administrators in regard to a safe school environment in Tranquility Public Schools?

Experience was not found to be an important factor in determining a teacher's perceptions about a safe school environment. No unusual patterns were observed in the descriptive data concerning threat items. ANOVA analysis of experience and threat items revealed no statistically significant results.

In both elementary and secondary arenas, there is a trend that indicates the more experienced a teacher is, the less safe they feel at school. In every location, more experienced teachers reported feeling slightly less safe than the less experienced teachers. Only in the teacher's lounge did the more experienced secondary teachers feel safer than did the less experienced secondary teachers.

ANOVA analysis revealed no statistically significant results.

Conclusions

The study of perceptions of teachers and administrators in an Oklahoma school district regarding safety and violence within the school environment found that differences do exist between teachers and administrators. The study and understanding of these finding could be useful in dealing with and resolving safety and violence issues within the school environment.

Differences exist between administrators and teacher perceptions. Although administrators did have concern for location threats; overall, teachers have a higher degree of concern for safety issues.

The study found gender to be an issue in the perception of school safety and violence issues. Female teachers and administrators expressed a higher perception of problem areas than males. These differences are evidenced primarily in the area of perceived problems and not locations.

The research found that differences do exist in the perceptions of elementary teachers and secondary teachers in regard to a safe school environment. Secondary teachers expressed a higher degree of concern for perceived sources of threats and location problems. Secondary teachers had a greater concern for the types of problems. This difference may be worthy of consideration in planning and dealing with safety and violence issues. Different issues, concerns and problems that need to be addressed may need to be handled differently at each level.

There is little difference in the way that more experienced and less experienced teachers and administrators regard their school as having a safe and non-violent environment. The findings indicated that teachers and administrators with greater experience have a slightly higher degree of concern for problems. Less experienced teachers have lower perceptions of safety as an issue at school. Perhaps the more experience a teacher or administrator has, the more insight they have into potential problems and they become better at identifying problem areas.

Oftentimes, the media portray schools as violent and dangerous places where teachers and students are victimized and subjected to deadly assaults. However, it can be concluded from this research that the teachers and administrators in Tranquility Public Schools do not perceive their schools as being violent or unsafe.

<u>Implications</u>

<u>Implications for Practice.</u>

The findings from this study indicate that schools are perceived as being safe environments. The perceptions of school violence and safety may not necessarily be shared by all stakeholders in a school or school district. If the areas of concern can be defined and the perceptions addressed, it is a step toward providing a safer and more secure educational environment. The data from this study may be useful in planning and designing approaches to promote safety and the reduction of school violence by avoiding a haphazard approach to addressing these problems. This research can serve as a basis of comparison for further research into teachers' and administrators' perceptions in other districts and areas of the country.

<u>Implications for Administrator and Teacher Preparation Programs.</u>

The results of this research may be shared and incorporated within teacher and administrator preparation classes in order to assist those participant students with lesson planning, classroom management techniques, discipline systems, and student teaching placement. In addition, exposure to the differing perceptions of the school violence questions may provide those entering the respective fields of teaching or administration with a valuable perspective that schools are safe.

With the assumption that schools are safe, teachers and administrators can concentrate their efforts on designing programs at all levels that promote even more pro-social behavior. Moreover, schools need to involve more actively other school personnel such as guidance counselors and social workers in developing programs that are appropriate to grade level (e.g., elementary, middle, high school) and the context in which the school is located (e.g., urban, suburban, rural). Canned programs often do not work because those who

interact daily with students are not involved in tailoring the materials and activities that fit the context of the classrooms or the school (Stephens, 1998).

Prospective administrators need to learn how to provide leadership in the areas of:

- establishing crisis-management policies and conducting crisis drills;
- conducting annual school safety site assessments; and,
- communicating with school personnel, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders the need to work together in all areas that deal with safety.

Implications for Future Research.

Although many questions were answered by this research, issues regarding school safety still need to be examined, and there are many questions that need to be answered. The following recommendations are suggested as a result of the findings of this study:

1. A replication of this study should be conducted in the future that would include all the teachers and administrators in the entire district to see if perceptions have changed on the issues of school safety and violence.

2. Research should be done on support personnel in Tranquility Public Schools to form a basis of comparison on school safety and violence issues. This research could be helpful in determining if teachers' and administrators' perceptions of school safety and violence differ from those of support personnel.

3. A study should be conducted to determine student perceptions of school safety and violence on campuses in Tranquility Public Schools. The data from such a study could be useful in

determining new problem or location areas not known to teachers and administrators.

4.   Research should be conducted in other districts in the region to see if the findings are similar.

5.   The study should be expanded to include school districts from different parts of the country. This would provide data that might be useful in determining if perceptions are of local regional or national concern.

While the data from this study provided useful information that can be helpful to schools planning to deal with safety issues, it should be noted that further study of the issue is sorely needed. The sample size for this study was limited, and consideration should be given to a larger study. The data included only one district; multiple districts need to be included in future research.

As society and schools rush to cope with the rash of incidents of school violence, a need for future studies is imperative. The data from these studies will be needed to help determine the types and effectiveness of solutions to ensure that schools continue to remain safe and secure.

The media would like the American public to believe that schools are unsafe. The hyperbole of the media is only serving to perpetuate the myth that schools are violent, unsafe places for teachers and students. Perhaps the American public should be invited into more schools so they can see first-hand that school environments are really safe havens for the students entrusted to teachers and administrators.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Consent

The University of Oklahoma
OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

May 18, 1999

Mr. Clifton T. Foote
10704 Meadowlark Lane
Midwest City, OK 73130

Dear Mr. Foote:

Your research application, "Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators in the   School
District Regarding a Safe School Environment," has been reviewed according to the policies of
the Institutional Review Board chaired by Dr. E. Laurette Taylor and found to be exempt from
the requirements for full board review. Your project is approved under the regulations of the
University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human
Subjects in Research Activities.

Should you wish to deviate from the described protocol, you must notify me and obtain prior
approval from the Board for the changes. If the research is to extend beyond 12 months, you
must contact this office, in writing, noting any changes or revisions in the protocol and/or
informed consent forms, and request an extension of this ruling.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Ph.D.
Administrative Officer
Institutional Review Board

SWS:pw
FY99-239

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board
      Dr. Mary John O'Hair, Education

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Appendix B

Letter of Permission

10704 Meadowlark Lane
Midwest City, OK 73130
March 21, 1999

Dr. Dixie Carol Powell
1342 Shrub Oak Dr.
League City, TX 77573

Dear Dr. Powell,

It was with pleasure that I finally found your number and talked with you by phone today. It was encouraging to speak with someone who shares the same interests in the area of researching school safety issues. You, however, have successfully completed your work and I congratulate you!

In reading your dissertation, I find that your study meets the needs of the research that I desire to conduct. Therefore, I respectfully request your permission to replicate your study in Oklahoma public schools through the utilization of your "Safe School Environment Survey."

Your consideration and response is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Clifton T. Foote

Clifton T. Foote

4/8/99

Dear Mr. Foote,

Please forgive this form of reply, but you are most welcome to use my survey. Best of luck in your endeavor!

Dixie Powell, Ed. D

Appendix C

Safe School Environment Survey

SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

As part of a doctoral research project, administrators and teachers are being asked to share their opinions about safety on school campuses in the Tranquility Public Schools system.

All campus administrators and a sample of 100 randomly selected teachers have been asked to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and you may decline to answer certain or all of the questions in this survey. However, your participation is important to the validity and success of this study and we encourage your full cooperation.

This survey will ensure that respondents remain anonymous. Please do not write your name on it. No names or individuals will be used in any report based on this survey.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please circle the letter/number that corresponds to your answer and return the survey in the enclosed envelope by _____.

Please check one: _____ Male   _____ Female

1. Circle the answer that best describes you.
   a. African-American
   b. Native American
   c. Hispanic
   d. Caucasian
   e. Other

2. How many years of experience do you have?
   a. 0-5 years
   b. 6-10 years
   c. 11-15 years
   d. 16-20 years
   e. 21 or over

3. What level is taught on your campus?
   a. Elementary
   b. Middle School
   c. High School

4. In comparing the school in which you teach with the neighborhood surrounding the school, which of the following statements is closest to your own beliefs?
   a. The school is a safer environment than the neighborhood.
   b. The neighborhood is a safer environment than the school.
   c. The school and the neighborhood are equally safe environments.
   d. The school and the neighborhood are equally unsafe environments.

OVER

Questions 5-15:
How would you rate the following problems at your school?

	Not Serious	Not Very Serious	Moderately Serious	Very Serious
5. Gangs:	1	2	3	4
6. Alcohol use by students:	1	2	3	4
7. Other drug use by students:	1	2	3	4
8. Intruders (outsiders) in building:	1	2	3	4
9. Verbal threats from students:	1	2	3	4
10. Likelihood of being assaulted/injured:	1	2	3	4
11. Possibility of sexual assault:	1	2	3	4
12. Destruction of school property:	1	2	3	4
13. Theft of school property:	1	2	3	4
14. Theft of personal property:	1	2	3	4
15. Carrying of weapons by students:	1	2	3	4

Questions 16-24:
During school hours at your site, how safe do you feel from personal attacks involving possible injury in each of the following places:

	Very Unsafe	Fairly Unsafe	Fairly Safe	Very Safe
16. Your classroom while teaching:	1	2	3	4
17. Empty classrooms:	1	2	3	4
18. Hallways and stairs:	1	2	3	4
19. Student lunchroom/cafeteria:	1	2	3	4
20. Restrooms used by students	1	2	3	4
21. Lounges or restrooms used by teachers:	1	2	3	4
22. Locker room or gym:	1	2	3	4
23. Parking lot:	1	2	3	4
24. Elsewhere outside on school grounds:	1	2	3	4

This completes the survey. Thank you for your time and cooperation!
Please return your completed survey to Asst. Supt. through your bldg. administrator or by separate cover by Friday, May 21.