

TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SAFETY AND RESPECT THAT
IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN MICHIGAN

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father Ceasar Mickens, my mother Ella Mae Mickens, and my brother Nathaniel Mickens. Without my father and mother, I would not have the drive to pursue my dreams and have the perseverance to reach my goals. I also would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Felicia Mickens and my daughter Maya Mae Mickens. Without their support during this process this would have never happened, I love them both deeply and their sacrifices made this possible.

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SAFETY AND RESPECT THAT IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN MICHIGAN

by Major E. Mickens

The success of a school or school district is contingent on a positive school climate within the schools. School climate is the character and quality of school life based on the experiences of stakeholders and reflects the values, goals and norms of the school. School safety is one of five dimensions of school climate and has been correlated with increased student achievement. Schools with positive safety records have a good influence on the local neighborhoods and families are more likely to settle in these areas. Establishing positive relationships among stakeholders is important in establishing positive school climate. Stakeholders' respect for each other is essential for success.

This study examines perceptions of teachers and students regarding school safety and respect and how that relates to schools' ratings on the top-to-bottom list, which has been developed by the State of Michigan Board of Education. The sample for the study included high school teachers and students in 31 high schools located in one Michigan suburban county during the 2011 -2012 school year. Three complimentary items measuring respect and safety were included on the survey that measured school climate. Analysis of the data included descriptive statistics, t-tests for independent samples, Pearson product moment correlations, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Six key findings emerged from the analysis. These findings included students had more positive perceptions regarding school safety than teachers, teachers were more likely to perceive that students respected each other more than students. The finding also indicated the schools that

had higher top-to-bottom rankings were more likely to be perceived as safer and teachers' and students' perceptions of student respect did not differ substantially. Additional findings indicated that relationships between school safety and respect were statistically significant in a positive direction, and students in the twelfth grade had more positive perceptions of school safety and student respect than ninth grade students. The findings of this study provide support for all stakeholders to work together to promote a safe and orderly school, promote high expectations for behavior, and create an environment conducive for academic achievement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student academic achievement is directly associated with positive school climate (Voight, Austin, & Hanson, 2013). A healthy climate in schools allows students to cope with the environment and utilize resources effectively to reach goals (Gülşen, & Gülenay, 2014). Positive traits, such as quality relationships among the students and staff and conflict resolutions for students, come with a healthy school climate (DeRosier & Newcity, 2005). However, negative traits that include conflict within and between the staff and student body such as bad behavior from adults or students are evidence of an unhealthy school climate. Smith (2012) explained that when the climate is unhealthy, students may be less likely to share information about possible danger or violence. Wang, Berry, and Swearer (2013) explained that when the school climate is unhealthy, students are more likely to participate in bullying types of behavior. Students are less likely to follow school rules when they do not feel connected to the school and the school environment is unfriendly (Wang et al. 2013). Wang, et al. suggested that thoroughly evaluating the school's climate and identifying potential problems can help establish policy for bad behavior.

Creating a positive school climate is essential to the success of any school or district. One of the five major dimensions of school climate is school safety. School climate is directly related to student achievement (Voight et al., 2013). Safe school climate is a correlated reflection of an increased student achievement therefore; identifying areas of concern affecting school safety can assist in improving academic performance and student outcomes within school (Voight et al., 2013).

The perceptions of staff and students regarding safety in the school are a reflection of the climate of the school for all stakeholders for several reasons. First, funding for public schools is contingent on the number of students in the school district, and safety concerns can deter students from enrolling. Second, identifying perceptions of safety for both teachers and students also is noteworthy, because the two group's perceptions are integral to the climate of the building. Third, school safety is a direct reflection of the school's climate and promotes an environment that can facilitate gains in student achievement. School safety is a primary concern in establishing an environment that is conducive for students to learn. Schools with positive safety records and high achievement are also good for the neighborhood because families are more likely to settle in an area because of the school's reputation. In many cases, information about school quality and safety is passed by word of mouth, rather than by official reports.

Respect is defined as feelings of high regard for someone or something that results from their abilities, qualities, or achievements. Goodman (2009) explained that respect in school can take on two forms:

1. Respect due is focused on liberal values of dignity for all.
2. Respect earned is embraces the elements that are autonomy, equality and dignity.

Goodman (2009) explained that:

respect due protects relationships from abuse and somewhat circumscribes adult authority, though it is compatible with respect to deference. . . . Respect earned "extend the boundaries to embrace elements of autonomy and equality along with dignity. . . . teachers, now fully respecting his/her students, expects less deference, willingly takes student opinions into consideration, and allows students more freedom of action. (p. 5)

A Harris poll was conducted in 2014 to compare parents' perceptions of mutual respect in the schools from when they were in school to today. The comparisons included teachers and parents,

teachers and students, and administration and teachers. Toppo (2014) explained that respect in schools was lower in every category (See Figure 1.) Parents believed mutual respect for teachers, parents, students, and administrators has declined substantially. Beckner (2004) explained respect is the guiding standard even in the time of disagreement, and that humanity and dignity for people must remain.

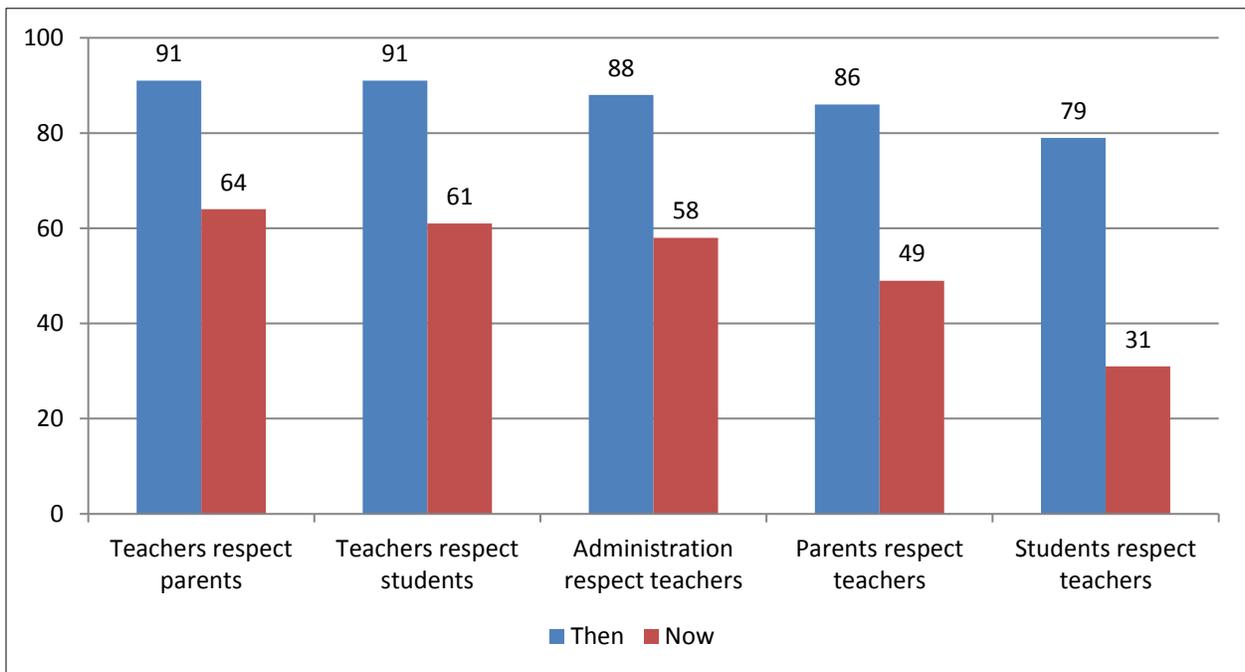


Figure 1. Parents Perceptions of Respect in Schools (Harris Poll, 2013)

The proposed study examines how school safety and respect relates to the school ratings on the top to bottom list instituted by the State of Michigan Board of Education. The top to bottom list is the ranking of schools from highest to lowest in student performance on the state mandated standardized tests. Schools that are at the bottom of the list are in jeopardy of a state takeover. Students are more likely to perform well in a positive and safe school climate (Voight et al., 2013). When a school is unsafe, parents may elect to transfer their children to another

school, and teachers may seek alternate employment (Gastic, & Gasiewski, 2008). Students and teachers should view safety using the same criteria. This can ensure that both groups refer to school safety the same within the district. According to Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013), teachers need to be able to address situations that appear to be unsafe. Students also need to identify when unsafe situations, remove themselves from the situation, and contact an adult. The common language can result in concordance between the students and teachers that would affect the school climate positively (Ripski, & Gregory, 2009).

This chapter includes a detailed overview of the problem and its significance. The purpose of the study and research questions, along with the conceptual framework and definitions of terms are presented. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the literature and research design.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study is to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety, respect in school, and how the perceptions compare to the school ranking within 31 Michigan suburban high schools.

Statement of the Problem

Two key terms help define school safety: physical and social-emotional security (National School Climate Center, 2015). Physical security is a sense that adults and students are secure from physical harm (National School Climate Center, 2015). Social-emotional security is the sense that students are free from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion (National School Climate Center, 2016). When these two definitions are satisfied, schools are deemed safe.

Physical violence in schools is not a contemporary problem. Examples from the past to current day are prevalent in our history books. In 1927, an angry farmer who was also a school board member from Bath City, Michigan blamed increased taxes as the reason for his financial problems. The farmer placed explosives in the basement of the school as well as the back of his truck. Forty-five people were killed, 38 of whom were children (Heath, Ryan, Dean, & Bingham, 2007). Since the Bath City bombing school violence has continued to rise in frequency of occurrence (Armstrong & Webb, 2006). In 1988, a 16-year-old boy killed his teacher (Heath et al., 2007). Because of these incidents, public concern prompted the federal government to enact the Safe Schools Act of 1994 (Ripski, & Gregory, 2009). April 20, 1999, two students, who had been victims of bullying, went on a shooting rampage at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Twelve students and one teacher died including the two shooters who committed suicide. In addition, 24 others were wounded (Bondü, Cornell, & Scheithauer, 2011). According to Shultz, Muschert, Dingwall, and Cohen (2013), a lone gunman went on a shooting spree in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut killing 20 students and six adults before killing himself. Although many of the problems were isolated incidents, school safety remains a major concern both on a local, state, and national level. The Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2015) reported that during the 2010-2011 school year 11 homicides of students who were between the ages five through 18 occurred on school property, either arriving at or leaving school, or attending a school event. In 2012, 749,200 students, from 12 to 18 years of age, were nonfatally victimized at school (CDC, 2015). According to Zhang, Musu-Gillette, and Oudekerk (2016) in 2014, 850,100 students from 12 to 18 were nonfatally victimized, for an increase of 100,900 incidents.

Social-emotional security is a concern for students. Bullying is a major concern as it relates to social-emotional security. Olweus (1994) defined bullying as an individual getting exposed, repeatedly and over time, to inappropriate negative behaviors on part from one or more students. Swearer and Hymel (2015) explained that bullying is a stressful event that leads to other problems for victims, including anxiety, depression, and aggression. According to researchers (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, &Sadek, 2010; Gendron, Williams, &Guerra, 2011), typical bullies has internal problems, such as low self-esteem, lack in social skills, and poor problem solving skills, and exhibits external behaviors. They also have academic challenges and a negative attitude toward others. Graham (2016) explains bullying is a major problem, because it is not limited to the school. For example, cyberbullies use the internet or social media to harass or intimidate their victims. There is never a time when victims are safe from bullying behaviors (Graham, 2016). Ten to 33% of students admit to being bullied (Hymel&Swearer, 2015). Depending on the type of bullying, bullying can be either direct, face-to-face, or indirect, possibly involving a third party (Viding, Simmonds, Petrides, & Frederickson, 2009). Because of the problems with bullying and school safety, federal and state legislation was enacted to address the issues.

School Safety Legislation

Federal legislation has been enacted to ensure school safety. According to the “Unsafe School Choice Option (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), three of the acts are:

1. The Gun-Free Schools Act which requires schools to expel any student who brings a firearm to school or is in the possession of a firearm for no less than one year (180 school days);

2. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires that schools transfer discipline records for any student who seeks to enroll in another district.
3. The unsafe school choice option that allows students who attend a persistently dangerous public school or students who have been victimized on school grounds to attend a safe public school.

The acts from federal legislatures were put in place to ensure the safety of students and staff in the public school system. Victimization of students (see Figure 2) decreased from 2002 through 2010, then began to increase through 2013 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Therefore, the federal legislation initially affected the extent of student victimization and now the number is increasing.

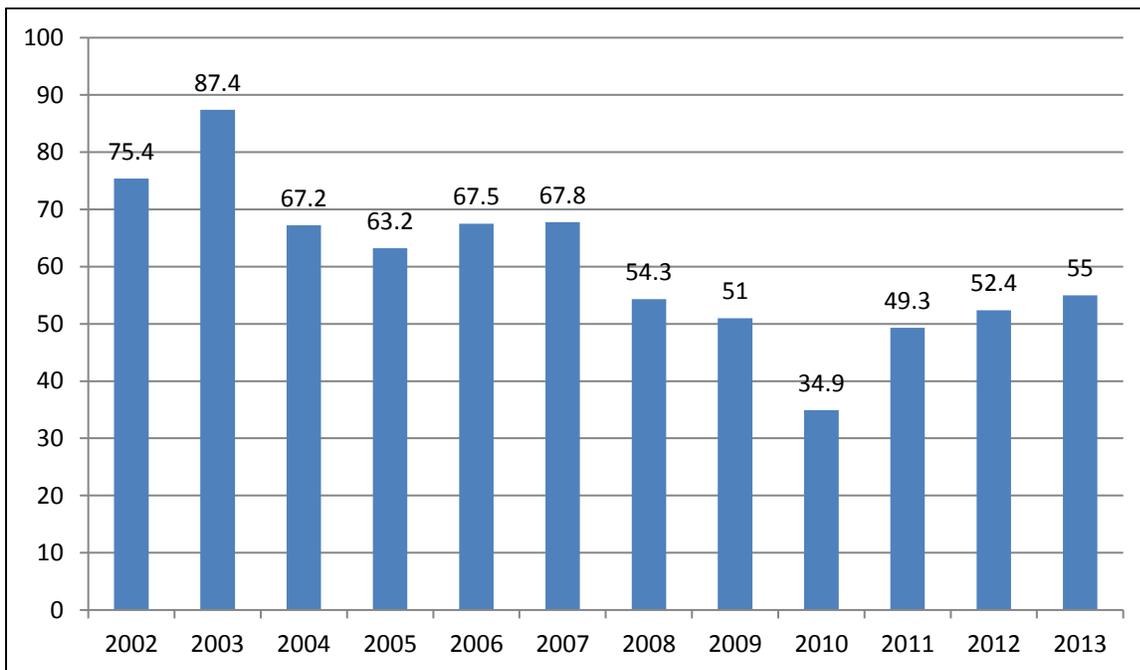


Figure 2. Trends in School Victimization – 2002 through 2013 (per thousand students; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016)

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, victimization is reported as theft, all violent, and seriously violent. Serious violent victimization includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. The all-violent category is both serious violent crimes and simple assault. Attempted purse snatching, completed pickpocketing, and thefts are included in the theft category. Figure 3 presents the incidence of serious violent and violent victimization among students at school.

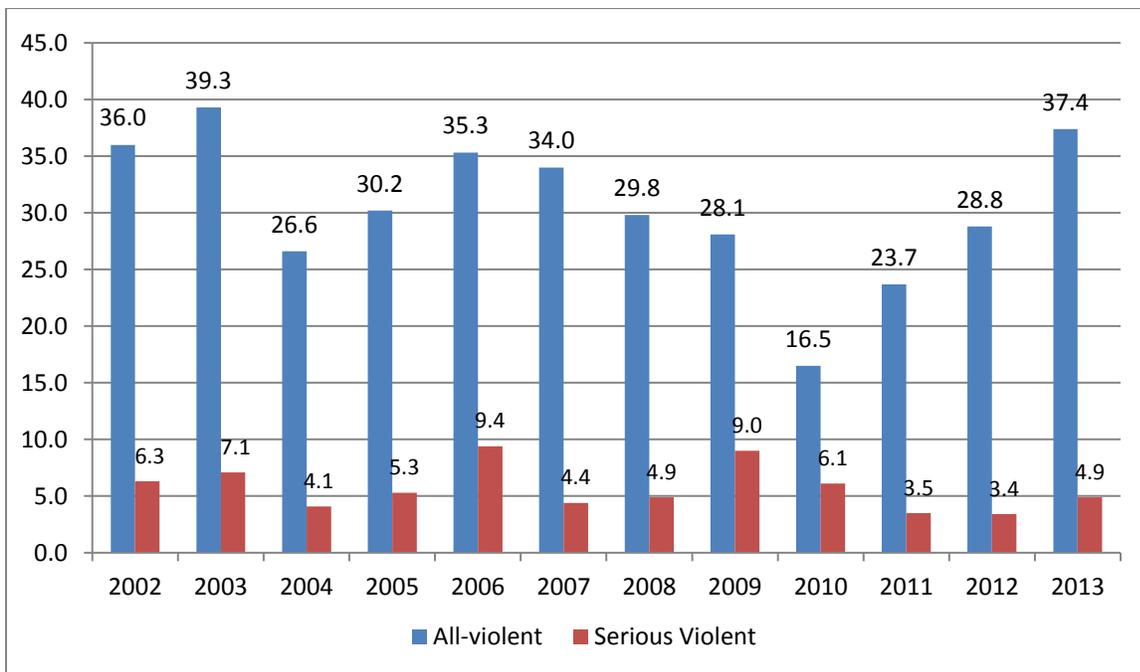


Figure 3. Trends in School Victimization – All Violent and Serious Violent – 2002 through 2013 (per thousand students; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016)

School safety is measured in two ways: first, from the perspective of students and staff in the building and second from the reported school violence (Kitsantas, Ware, & Martinez-Arias, 2004). Students and teachers are responsible for reporting violent and bullying incidences within a school, but may underreport out of fear of reprisal or further violence (Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2014). National and state reports by NCES or the

CDC of school victimization may rely on the information provided by the schools to the states resulting in underreporting. The problem with these data is that the numbers do not reflect perceptions that students and teachers have regarding victimization.

Student concerns about safety are a concern in all schools. Several factors can affect their apprehension about being safe at school. First, according to Kitsantas et al. (2004), student's perceptions are shaped by the neighborhood in which the school is located. If the surrounding neighborhood is considered violent then students' perceptions of safety is affected both at school, as well as on the way to and from school. Second, students' perceptions are influenced by the number of conflicts they think are occurring within the school buildings (Derosier&Newcity, 2005). Third, the extent of substance abuse occurring in the school also can affect students' perceptions regarding safety (Kitsantas et al., 2004). National and state statistics may indicate declines in the rate of violent behaviors, however students may still feel unsafe due to potential or perceived harm that may occur (Kitsantas et al., 2004).

Similar to students, teachers also are concerned about safety in the school, although they typically rate the school building safer than the students (Ricketts, 2007). A troublesome discrepancy exists between how teachers and students define and view safety (Booren, Handy, & Power, 2011). Booren et al. (2011) conducted a study of teachers (n = 32) and students (n = 182) by completing the Indicators of Preferences for School Safety (IPPS; Booren& Handy, 2009). Teachers and students rated 27 items measuring four subscales; rule enforcement, education, control and surveillance, and counseling. The teachers rated each subscale higher than students (Booren et al., 2011). The researchers suggested that because of the students' low ratings for each of the subscales, they should be given a greater voice in determining school safety procedures.

To reduce the discrepancy between teachers and students regarding their perceptions of school safety, developing a common language between them is important. With discussions concerning safety rules and procedures, a true understanding of what is considered safe and unsafe can be determined. Once agreement is obtained on safety then school administration can begin to find solutions to the safety issues that are of concern to all stakeholders in the school system.

Underperforming Schools

President George W. Bush presented a plan in 2001 addressing the problems with the public school system. No Child Left Behind was a revision to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and was designed to assign accountability measure to school district for the inability of students to perform at grade level. No Child Left Behind was designed to reward schools that were doing well by providing bonuses and sanction those schools that were low or underperforming by removing federal funds from the schools (NCLB, 2001).

Knudson, Shambaugh, and O'Day (2011) identified nearly 13,000 schools that were underperforming and needed improvement, or more seriously, needed restructuring. Various reasons have been offered on why schools are underperforming or have low achievement. These reasons include, but are not limited to, lack of parent involvement, poor leadership, lack of school improvement plans or curriculum aligned with state and federal benchmarks (Duke, 2006). Duke (2006) explained the principals and teacher leaders are responsible for establishing the school climate, which can have an effect on student achievement. MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) explained the evidence from research on successful principals suggested that establishing

a positive climate is conducive to learning, as well as improving teacher morale and student achievement.

Top to Bottom List

The state of Michigan has created a Top to Bottom list that ranks public school performance using percentages that are based on student performance in core subject areas, including mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies and graduation rate data (for high schools). In addition to test scores, school performance components that include student achievement, as well as improvement and achievement gaps between the highest and lowest scoring 30% of students in each school are considered in developing the ratings (Michigan Department of Education [MDE], 2016). Four different categories (reward, focus, priority, or no designation) for school exist within the rankings based on the top-to-bottom rankings (MDE, 2016). The majority of schools in Michigan have no designation. Public schools in Michigan receive their designations for the following reasons. *Reward Schools* are schools that are in the highest 5% of the top-to-bottom rankings or have been designated as “beating the odds” (i.e., schools are outperforming other schools with similar demographic composition or risk factors, have made high progress by improving in each subject area, or have had continuous improvement beyond the 2022 proficiency targets (beginning in 2013)). *Focus schools* can be high achieving, but have large achievement gaps between the top and bottom 30% of their students. Priority schools are included in the 5% of the top-to-bottom list, have received a school improvement grant in 2010 or 2011 to turn the school around, or have been identified as persistently low-achieving schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions inform this study:

1. Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?
2. Is there a difference in perceptions of school respect between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?
3. Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?
4. Is there a difference in school respect among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?
5. To what extent is there a relationship between school safety and respect for students?
6. To what extent is there a difference in school safety and respect between freshman and senior students?

In the first and second research questions, the dependent variables are the perceptions of safety and respect in the school. The independent variable is the role of the participant, teacher or student. In the third and fourth research question, the dependent variables are the perceptions of school safety and respect. The independent variable is the school ranking on the top to bottom list given by the State of Michigan as a result of test scores. School ranking is a continuous variable that will be divided into four groups by ranking the schools and then dividing them into quadrants that will produce relatively equal numbers in each group.

Significance of the Study

Understanding of the perceptions of safety and respect for students and teachers is important for educators, parents, and community members. Students' and teachers' perceptions of respect and safety can have an effect on school climate. When students and teachers have mutual respect for each other, conflict is reduced in the school. Bullying is less likely to occur and students will feel safe from intimidation. This research will extend the knowledge of how respect and safety can have an effect on school climate.

School and central office administrators need to be aware of any discrepancies between teachers and students regarding their perceptions of safety and respect in their schools. As students and teachers must feel safe in their environments, the administrators must take steps to reduce the discrepancy. They can initiate interventions to improve feelings of mutual respect among teachers and students. Respect among students and staff can contribute to the feelings of being safe within the school and may be an effective deterrent to bullying.

Definition of Terms

- Beating the Odds: Schools that have identifiable risk factors contributing to low student achievement but still perform well regardless of their location or socioeconomic state (MDE, 2016).
- Bullying: Act of repeated aggression, teasing or taunting towards another student or students, with victims finding it difficult to defend themselves (Aalsma, & Brown, 2008).
- Cyber bullying: The use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone, pager text messages, instant messaging, social media sites,

defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others (Belsey, 2008).

- **Connectedness:** Students' feelings of being supported by teachers and staff that include autonomy, respect, fairness, caring, belonging, and warmth (McNeely, 2013).
- **Chronically Underperforming:** Schools that are not performing at their expected level for two years or more (Spellings, 2007).
- **No Child Left Behind:** Bill signed by President George W. Bush to place more accountability on the school for their student's performance (NCLB, 2001).
- **Respect:** Feelings of regard for someone or something that results from their abilities, qualities, or achievements. Goodman (2009) explained that respect in school can take on two forms: (a) respect due is focused on liberal values of dignity for all and (b) respect earned is embraces the elements that are autonomy, equality and dignity.
- **School Safety:** Creation of a secure learning environment that meets the basic requirements for students to achieve academic success and healthy human development (Hernandez et. al., 2010).
- **School Environment:** The physical building, classroom, support systems, and policies of the school (Lanningham-Foster et al., 2008).
- **School Climate:** The quality and character of school life that is based on experiences of people and reflects norms, goals, and values of the school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

- Stakeholder: All students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community associated with the school (Cohen et al., 2009).

Assumptions

This study includes the assumption that the school ranking from the State of Michigan is an accurate academic ranking of the schools. In addition, this study assumes that the ability to learn or succeed academically can be negatively affected by concerns of school safety and lack of respect. An assumption of this study is that the data were previously collected using appropriate procedures and that none of the responses were coerced.

Methodological Approach

A non-experimental, quantitative research design using previously collected data will be used in this study. The population for the study is teachers and students in a suburban Michigan county with 31 high schools who completed a survey during the 2011-2012 school year. The intermediate school district distributes the survey each year to the local school districts. The survey focuses on school climate in the school, with three complementary items measuring respect and safety completed by both teachers and students. Analysis of the data includes descriptive statistics, t-tests for independent samples, Pearson product moment correlations and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Overview of Complete Document

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction and overview of the study, including the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. Chapter two presents a comprehensive review of literature that

supports the need for the study. The thematic literature review centers on themes including: climate, safety, rules and norms, social-emotional security and physical safety. Chapter three provides the methodology and explains the methods used to complete the study. Chapter four analyzes the data from the study to address the research questions. A summary of the study along with interpretation of the findings, implications for school administrators, and recommendations for further research are included in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this quantitative study is to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and how the perceptions compare to the school ranking, within 31 Michigan suburban high schools. This chapter is divided into five sections (a) school climate, (b) school safety, (c) school rules and norms, (d) physical security in school, and (e) social-emotional security in school. A brief summarization of school climate provides insight into the history and theory related to student behavior. The primary focus of the study, school safety and its importance on the overall climate of the school is described in this chapter. An explanation of school rules and norms and their relationship to school safety on a daily basis is presented. The section on physical security in school offers a description of the importance that individuals within the school have a sense of physical security in the school building. The social-emotional security in school is included to show how a sense of social-emotional security influences school safety.

School Climate

Since the early 1900s, school climate became an important topic in the development of quality schools (Perry, 1908). Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) explained that a consensus of the definition of school climate has not been reached among scholars, therefore definitions, while similar, are not exact. The National School Climate Center (NSCC, 2016) defined school climate as the quality of school life. Jain, Cohen, Huang, Hanson and Austin (2015) defined school climate as all aspects of the school that affects the learning and teaching process and includes the physical and social aspects of the school environment. Teachers,

students, and parents contribute to the development of the vision for a positive school climate (Cohen et al., 2009). The climate is the sum of the experiences of all stakeholders, and includes organizational structures, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, norms, values, goals, and safety (NSCC, 2016). Cohen et al. (2009) suggested that school climate is not specific to an individual, but is a shared experience by all members of the school community. Establishing a positive school climate can benefit all stakeholders involved in the school. Research has found that a negative correlation exists between students' threatening behaviors and positive school climate (Wang, Berry & Swearer, 2013). Positive school climate can influence students' academic achievement, positive maturation, and effective risk deterrence (NSCC, 2016). Brookmeyer, Fanti, and Henrich, (2006) argued that a healthy school climate has been linked to increased teacher retention, improved student graduation rates, and reduced aggressive behavior and violence.

Noonan (2004) described seven contributing factors that help in developing a healthy and safe school climate:

- *Models* - adults need to be great examples to model good behavior and set high expectation for the students;
- *Consistency* - staff must be consistent with students and parents;
- *Depth* - is making sure that all of the day to day and behind the scene items are in order such as mission statements and other rituals that may leave a lasting first impression;
- *Democracy* - is spreading the power to prevent a top down mentality;
- *Community* - communicate the need for community involvement;

- *Engagement* - students need to be involved in the overall positive atmosphere of the building;
- *Leadership* - a strong leader is needed to implement the changes that need to take place to establish a positive climate.

Three factors related to students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate related to school safety are consistency, engagement, and leadership.

School climate has evolved over the past 100 years. Wang, Berry, and Swearer (2013) conceptualized school climate as an environment created by the interactions between the students and adults. Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro. (2013) described four dimensions of focus for school climate including: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment. Similar to the previous dimensions, Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) asserted that the essential dimensions of school climate include: (a) environmental-structural; (b) teaching and learning; (c) relationships; and (d) safety. These four dimensions are explained below.

Environmental-Structural

The school climate dimension of environmental-structural refers to the building essentials and everyday operations. Thapa et al. (2013) suggested two important categories are included in the environmental structure: staff and student engagement and the physical layout of the building. The importance of the environment-structural dimension is prevalent in smaller schools. School climate can be affected by the layout of the building, with smaller schools having benefits for students related to student achievement, interactions with community members, and safety concerns (Thapa et al., 2013). Cohen et al. (2009) described environmental-

structural as the quality and size of the building, as well as the extracurricular activities offered by the school and the cleanliness or properly maintained building. Zullig et al. (2010) explained environment-structure as the physical attributes of the building, including temperature, condition of the grounds, noise level in hallways, classroom condition, and quality of care for the building by the staff, such as bulletin boards and decorations. The features and condition of the building can affect perceptions of students and teachers who are in the building on a daily basis.

Teaching and Learning

The main purpose of school is teaching and learning. Educating students and informing parents is the job of the school employees. Zullig et al. (2010) referred to teaching and learning as academic outcomes that can be defined as establishing academic norms and instruction, as well as recognizing significant academic accomplishments. Thapa et al. (2013) explained teaching and learning as an important dimension, elaborating that building leaders needed to establish rules and norms, as well as goals and values because a positive school climate could motivate students to learn. Ramelow, Currie, and Felder-Puig (2015) cited the National School Climate Center (NSCC) in describing the four dimensions of teaching and learning domain of school climate:

- School leaders establishes a positive school climate and disseminates a positive vision to all stakeholders.
- Quality of instruction focuses all learning styles, with staff providing help for students who are struggling to learn.
- Social, emotional, and ethical learning is an important aspect of teaching and learning that is valued and integrated across all subject areas.

- Professional development involves providing support for teachers in continuing education with meaningful in-services.

Teaching and learning is an important component of school climate and reflects the relationships that are established among the stakeholders of the school. Teachers, students, administrators, staff, and parents need to work together to create the positive environment that is conducive for academic success for all students.

Relationships

Creating a positive environment for students, staff, and parents also is important for the success of school. Establishing meaningful relationships among the stakeholders is paramount to a positive school climate. Cohen et al. (2009) explained three components of relationships: (a) respect for diversity, with adults respecting each other as well as students; (b) school community collaboration that involves a constantly ongoing collaboration with city officials, as well as parent groups; and (c) morale and connectedness, with the staff showing excitement about education and engaging students in the learning process. According to Cohen et al. (2009), school should be perceived as a safe place for all stakeholders. Students educated in a school with a negative climate are less likely to provide any information pertaining to the well-being of the school to a staff member (Smith, 2012). Smith continued that this nondisclosure of potential problems may be the result of the lack of positive relationships with adults and the belief that staff member will not resolve the problem. Students who do not feel connected or supported by teachers and administrators are less likely to follow the school rules (Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013).

Thapa et al. (2013) explained that an important outcome of positive relationships in a school is the feeling of connectedness among students, as well as with staff members. These feelings also are important in fostering a positive school climate. Connectedness relates to the staff and student relationships, engagement, and sense of involvement (Zullig, Koopman, Patton, & Ubbes, 2010). When students have healthy positive relationships with teachers, the outcomes can have a positive effect on student perceptions of the school as a safe place to learn.

Safety

School safety is an important topic in that parents want to believe when their children arrive at school, they will be safe from harm and danger. NSCC (2016) delineated three components of school safety that are necessary in a school with a positive school climate. These components include: (a) having specific rules and norms for student and staff behavior, (b) feeling physically secure, and (c) having a sense of socioemotional safety. A school that provides these three components disseminates their rules regarding behavior, including physical aggression, bullying, and harassment. These rules are enforced consistently for all students and staff. When these rules are enforced, students and staff feel safe in the building and are able to focus on teaching and learning. Noonan (2004) explained that stakeholders in a school have concluded that evaluating school climate requires a multifaceted approach. These administrators, teachers, parents, and students are willing to use surveys and observations to develop a positive school climate that could promote teaching and learning in a safe environment.

Each of the four dimensions of school climate (environmental-structural, teaching and learning, relationships, and safety) are necessary for a school to develop a positive school climate. In a school with a positive climate, students feel safe and empowered to learn. The

teachers are able to develop relationships with their peers, the administrators, and the students. These relationships build trust and confidence for all stakeholders. Perceived safety in the school, as the fourth dimension of school culture, is necessary for students to be able to learn without fear of being harassed or bullied.

School Safety

NSCC (2016) suggested that a safe school will provide a sense of physical security, with students and adults feeling physically safe from harm while in school. In addition, students and teachers will have a sense of social-emotional security where they feel safe from exclusion, teasing, and verbal abuse. A third dimension of school safety is the existence of rules and norms that prohibit harassment, and assure consistency in the enforcement of these rules. These three dimensions are important in creating a safe environment for all stakeholders in the school. Reviewing the history of school safety can help understand how stakeholders perceive the importance of a safe environment for students in their schools.

History of School Safety

Since the mid-1800s, school safety has been a major concern for parents, teachers, staff, and students. Several events that occurred since this time that have shaped that way society views school safety. Heath, Ryan, Dean, and Bingham (2007) explained that between 1851 and 1976, several events occurred that brought attention to school safety. In 1851, 40 children were killed while exiting the building in New York as a result of a false fire alarm. In Collinwood Ohio in 1908, a fire destroyed an elementary school, resulting in the deaths of 172 students, two teachers and 1 rescuer. In 1927, an explosion destroyed a school in Bath Michigan, killing 36 children and 2 staff members. In 1937, a gas explosion destroyed the New London School

District in Rusk County Texas with a death toll estimated at 300 people. During the 1950s, the Department of Education initiated safety drills to prepare students for a possible nuclear attack which later became the basis for school tornado and earthquake drills. In 1958, a school fire in a parochial school in Chicago killed 92 students and 3 adults, with an additional 77 people injured (Heath et al., 2007). Each of these events, although accidental in nature, jeopardized the safety of the students, parents, and school staff members. On July 15, 1976, a school bus was hijacked involving the bus driver and twenty-six students, everyone survived the incident, no injuries or fatalities were reported (Heath et. al., 2007).

Additional situations involving students and staff have occurred that have had a major impact on how schools react to issues involving student safety. On March 24, 1998, two students in Jonesboro, Arkansas pulled the fire alarm and began to shooting students as they walked out of the school, four students and one teacher were killed the two students were later arrested and charged (Schildkraut, & Hernandez, 2014). The tragedy at Columbine High School on April, 20, 1999 where two armed students entered the high school in Colorado and began shooting killing 13 people, 12 students and one staff member (Hong, Cho, Allen-Meares, & Espelage, 2011). At the time of its occurrence the Columbine shooting was one of the largest school shootings in the history of the United States of America. Addington (2009) explained the response to this mass shooting affected most schools in the United States due to the implementation of various safety measures (e.g., school police liaison officers, extra personnel to monitor students, and security cameras).

The final two incidents are explained to have a historical perspective of the major incidences of school violence: the April 16, 2007 Virginia Tech shooting and the December 14, 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting. On April 16, 2007, a shooting occurred at

Virginia Technological University, with a lone gunman killing 33 people including himself on the campus. This event was the largest school shooting at the time. Although the event took place at the post-secondary level, there were implications for elementary and secondary school levels (Hong, Cho, & Lee, 2010). On December 14, 2012, the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting involved a lone gunman, who was neither a student nor school personnel, entered the school and began to shoot students and staff members and then took his own life (Shultz, Muschert, Dingwall, & Cohen, 2013).

There are many more examples of school violence and safety concerns, however, the events presented are the most important in regards to the shaping of policy because they had increased media attention and therefore legislative response. These major school safety issues, spaced out over several decades, have elicited a common reaction from the government. This reaction was in the form of legislation to attempt to prevent further incidences. Various legislative changes took place in response to the school shootings. The response to the Westside Middle school shooting in Jonesboro, Arkansas was the passage of legislation allowing the prosecutors to charge anyone, regardless of age who committed either capital or first-degree murder as an adult. Prior to this incident, it was assumed that anyone from 7 to 13 years of age was incompetent to stand trial (Schildkraut, & Hernandez, 2014). Prior to this new legislation, minors would only be incarcerated until the age of 21 for their crimes. The legislative response to the Columbine High School shooting was an attempt to close the loophole that allowed the high school gunmen to purchase the firearms. A majority of the proposed legislation did not pass, although Governor Bill Owens, was able to pass a bill that required a state background check for firearm purchases (Schildkraut, & Hernandez, 2014). In response to the Virginia Tech shooting by a mentally ill student who killed 30 students and staff, Governor Timothy Kaine

signed an executive order requiring information on individuals who are considered to be a potential harm to themselves and others to be posted on all relevant databases (Schildkraut, & Hernandez, 2014). Legislation has been put in place as a response to violence within the schools and to prevent future school safety issues.

School safety drills were implemented to help prepare school personnel and students for the possibility of an emergency (Heath et al., 2007). The safety drills help teach students and adults self-protective behaviors that in turn will help reduce non-fatal and fatal injuries during natural disasters, community and school violence (Ramirez, Kubicek, Peek-Asa, & Wong, 2009). Heath et al. (2007) asserted that in 1901 the Governor of New York signed a bill requiring schools to have mandatory fire drills in response to past safety concerns for students and staff. As a result of the school fire in 1958, the building codes for all schools and public buildings in Chicago focused on the importance of maintaining current safety equipment (Lindle, 2008). The safety drills have been expanded to include various emergencies that may occur in a school setting, such as fire, tornado, and intruder.

In Michigan, each school is required to conduct various types of drills: fire, tornado, and intruder (State of Michigan, 2006). Six fire drills are required in each school, of which four have to be completed in the fall and two at any other time of the year. Two of these fire drills need to be conducted during lunch or recess periods. The law also requires two tornado drills to be held during the school year. In addition, school districts are required to conduct two school intruder drills, one of which needs to be when all students are not in classrooms, for example during lunch or before school as students are entering the building. School safety situations in the past have shaped legislation to support and prepare schools to maintain a safe environment for staff and students. The legislations and regulations provide opportunities to prepare staff and students

to minimize potential tragedies (Heath et al., 2007; State of Michigan, 2006). Conducting fire and disaster drills have become integrated into the school environment to the extent that they have become a part of the rules and norms of a school.

Rules and Norms of a School

Rules are formal and guide the everyday operations of the school, while norms are the unwritten traditions that impact school climate. Rules and norms are a vital dimension in maintaining a safe environment for the students and staff of any school. NSCC (2016) explained rules and norms as rules that are on display or communicated regarding: school violence, verbal abuse, teasing and harassment; while norms are clear and consistent guidelines that are enforced by the adults. Five different types of rules exist:

- relational that refers to how to behave in respect to other people;
- structural that refers to the maintenance of the physical environment of the school;
- protection is the rules that involve safety and protecting students from harm;
- personal are rules that call for students to focus on one's own behavior and personal responsibility;
- etiquette that refers to how students are to behave in social situations (Thornberg, 2008).

These definitions incorporate three important components of rules and norms: (a) rules are clear, on display or distributed to all stakeholders for the purpose of transparency and preventing violence to property or others; (b) rules about harassment, teasing and verbal abuse are clearly presented to all stakeholders; and (c) norms are clear, consistent and enforced (NSCC, 2016).

Rules and norms are in place to maintain order and discipline, as well to provide a safe environment for all stakeholders.

Rules are established to maintain a school environment that is favorable to learning, control student behavior, deter students from being harmful to one another, as well as school property (Thornberg, 2008). Rules related to violence towards oneself or another are clearly presented to the student body in an effort to deter the violent behavior before it occurs (NSCC, 2016). This type of rule is important because it helps prevent students from doing harm to themselves or other. Thornberg (2008) explained this type of rule as protecting both students, staff, and the building. When these rules are properly enforced it can have a positive effect on perceptions of staff and students regarding school safety.

NSCC (2016) explained the rules that apply to harassing, teasing and verbal abuse are important to help maintain a healthy school environment for all stakeholders. Thornberg (2008) explained these types of rules are relational because they involve students' treatment one another. Relational rules create a positive effect on the perspectives of students and staff on the school environment because they foster positive behavior from students.

Smetana (2006) explained that norms are a way of life and how things are handled on a daily basis. These are habits that begin at home such as, etiquette and manners, and get enforced and reiterated when students arrive to school. Thornberg (2008) referred to this rule as etiquette because it guides the manner in which students should behave in social situations. The social environment, in this case the school determines the norms, the school administrator also upholds the norms as well as the school rules. When students and staff adhere to the proper norms of the building, their perspectives about being safe in the school are positively affected.

Physical Security

According to NSCC (2016), physical security is the perceptions that that students and adults have about being safe from harm while in the school or at school events. A sense of physical security is a major component of creating a healthy school climate. The sense of physical security involves safety from natural disasters or building issues, a sense of safety from violence brought on by other individuals in the building, and the government's response to the school violence. Each of these topics has an impact on the student and staff perception of the school as a safe place to learn.

Hernandez, Floden, and Bosworth, (2010) explains a basis requirement for a child to experience healthy human development is a safe and secure learning environment. Staff and the student perceptions can be influenced by their feelings about the building. For example, schools with metal detectors (approximately 6% of public schools) are perceived to be unsafe by staff and students (Gastic, 2010). Lindle (2008) explained that the federal government requires each school to plan for emergency and crises situations. Therefore, each state mandates that every public or charter school has to conduct natural disaster drills, for example, Michigan requires each school to do a total of six fire drills, with four of the six drills conducted before December 1st and at least two held during lunch or recess periods (State of Michigan, 2006). The schools also must conduct two tornado drills and three drills that restrict an individual's entrance into the building and classrooms (State of Michigan, 2006). The drills are intended to prepare and protect staff and students in the event of an active shooter, tornado touchdown, building fire, or flood. The perceptions of the students and the staff are important to creating a positive school climate that incorporates an image of the school as a safe place to learn.

Students' perceptions of being safe at school can have an influence on their behavioral engagement, with students who feel unsafe or in danger negatively affected (Ripski & Gregory, 2009). Administrators, teachers, and parents work together to modify student behavior in the school, with behavior modifications implemented in the building including, but not limited to Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and Restorative Practices. PBIS, a school-wide program from kindergarten through 12th grade, is a prevention method used to create a positive school environment for staff, students, and parents (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008). The positive changes in school climate after implementing PBIS is so apparent that Maryland has adopted PBIS state-wide. Restorative Practices also is a school-wide intervention system that focuses on bringing the person who committed the act and the victim together along with support systems from each side (Roche, 2006). These interventions are a response to violent or disruptive behavior by students as well as create safe school environment resulting in a positive school climate.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the federal government's response to problems that occur in United States schools. NCLB (2001) is in place to hold the school districts and staff accountable for the education and the safety of the students. Part of NCLB, known as the Unsafe School Choice Option (USCO), gives students alternatives to their current schools, if they are a persistently dangerous school as determined by the individual state governments (NCLB, 2001). States need to identify persistently dangerous schools, determine the types of events that are violent crimes, provide safe school choice options, and establish a USCO policy for states to be in compliance with the federal NCLB act (USCO, 2004). This act requires schools to document the violent events that occur at school and report them to the state. When schools are persistently dangerous, the school district must explain this situation to the parents of students in the school

and provide them with an alternative school that is not considered dangerous for the students to attend (NCLB, 2001). If a student is a victim of a violent crime, the district must also provide an alternative school for the student to attend and the alternative school cannot be persistently dangerous (NCLB, 2001). The USCO is a direct reflection of the students' and teachers' perceptions of the school and requires schools to create positive school environments or give students options to transfer to a better environment.

The sense of being physically secure in the school building is highlighted by three main ideas. Feeling safe from natural disasters or building issues such as a fire or flooding. Being safe from harm involving other students or staff within the building during school after school or at school functioned events. By enacting NCLB and the USCO, the government is identifying schools as persistently dangerous and providing students and parents with help in finding an alternative to current school.

Social Emotional Security

According to NSCC (2016), social emotional security is the feeling that students are safe from verbal cruelty, mockery, and being left out. Social emotional security is the most publicized problem in schools, driven by social media, technology, and the behavior of some disruptive students. Undeserving students become targets to the cruelty of these actions. Social emotional security has several factors that help explain student involvement: (a) bullying is a major problem that affects the student socially and emotionally; (b) peer relationships can influence the social emotional security of students; and (c) perceptions of students' belonging in the school community (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009). An elaboration of the three factors of

social emotional security can help understand the issues that students and staff encounter in a school with a negative school climate.

Bullying is the intentional and deliberate act of harassing another person, and also occurs repetitively over time (Bacchini, Esposito, & Affuso, 2009). However, each person interprets bullying differently. O'Brennan et al. (2009) explained that concerns for bullying and the involvement of bullies and victims in the school system have been increasing for the past decade. This increase in concern for students involved in this type of behavior is due in part to the rate of suicide resulting from bullying. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) asserted that bullying in all forms, including online or cyberbullying, contributes to a higher rate of suicidal ideation. In some cases, staff can hinder the process of bullying prevention because of the reaction or the lack of a reaction. Staff often advocate differently based on the gender of the student when intervening in a bullying situation (Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Pelletier, 2008). O'Brennan et al. (2009) suggested that more than one-third of students are involved in frequent bullying. While this issue remains relevant in schools, another problem involving social-emotional security is peer relationships within the school.

Bullying is the act of repeated aggression, teasing, or taunting towards another person or people, with victims finding it difficult to defend themselves (Aalsma & Brown, 2008). Research has shown that bullying has a negative association with school climate therefore when school climate is unhealthy or not wholesome students are more likely to participate in bullying behaviors (Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). Cornell (2011) identified three areas in school climate that are related to bullying and student or peer aggression:

- commonness of teasing and bullying among students;
- attitudes of students that encourage and value aggressive behaviors;

- students' readiness to seek help for staff members for peer aggression.

Wang, Berry, and Swearer (2013) asserted that when students believed that bullying behaviors were normal and approved by staff and peers, students tended to view this acceptance as the inability of the school to deal with the bullying behaviors and were more likely to engage in the negative behavior. Therefore, it is important to evaluate school climate properly. If the school climate is negative, administrators and staff need to take action to correct the problems effectively to reduce bullying behavior among students in the school.

Cyberbullying also has become problematic among students in and out of school. Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies (e.g., e-mail, cell phone, pager text messages, instant messaging, social media sites, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites) to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or groups that is intended to harm others (Belsey, 2008). Schneider et al. (2012) argued that cyberbullying has distinct characteristics that establish the difference school bullying and cyberbullying:

- cyberbullying assailants that use electronic communication can remain anonymous and contact a wide range of people;
- there is a sense of less responsibility because of the lack of face to face communication;
- students who may not get affected by school bullying can be subject to cyberbullying.

Students who are perpetrators of cyberbullying may be attempting to deal with a variety of problems that have occurred in their lives. However, bullying and cyberbullying tend to indicate a lack of respect for others in their lives. Respect or the lack of respect can have an effect on school climate both as an engagement and as a safety issue.

Respect among school stakeholders is important in determining school climate. Respect is feelings of regard for someone or something that results from their abilities, qualities, or achievements (Goodman, 2009). He explained that respect in school can take on two forms: (a) respect due is focused on liberal values of dignity for all and (b) respect earned is embraces the elements associated with autonomy, equality, and dignity. Goodman (2009) explained that respect-earned allows for independence and equal opportunity with dignity. In this case a teacher expects less resistance and also allows students to have more freedom of action. Goodman (2009) indicated that respect needs to be an important value in schools. For that reason, the term has strong implications for developing a positive school climate. Respect does not appear to be highly valued in schools. A stronger emphasis on respect for all stakeholders in education, as well as the society as a whole, is needed in all educational activities (Goodman, 2009).

Peer relationships are an important aspect of school life. In many cases, students are identified by who their friends are and how they treat one another. Peers can be a support system for one another and provide a sense of connectedness and a sense of belonging (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Lindstrom Johnson, 2014). A positive home environment can influence student behavior at school. Family structure and socioeconomic status also is a link to coherence or connectedness at the school (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Along with positive relationships having positive influences on the student, negative relationships can have negative impacts on the student as well.

Students and staff feel the daily routine associated with the school is important to the perceived social emotional security in the building. Blum (2005) explained that students are likely to be successful when they feel connected to the school environment. Thompson, Iachan,

Overpeck, Ross, and Gross (2006) argued that students who feel connected to their school tend to have positive emotional outlooks, better health, and are less likely to have suicidal ideation. Problems that may hinder students' connection with their school include social isolation by students or staff, teachers who have poor classroom management skills, and lack of a viable building safety plan (Blum, 2005). Feelings of connectedness is related to student and teacher perceptions of the school because a sense of belonging is an important component of social emotional security.

Building a positive climate requires the school to create an environment that provides students with social emotional security and feelings of safety. The sense of security in a school can be damaged if bullying is occurring among students. Peer relationships are important in creating a sense of social emotional security for students. Students with these types of relationships are more likely to have positive experiences throughout their years in the high school. Students who feel that they have a connection to the school environment are more likely to excel in academics. Each aspect of social emotional security also relates back to the student and staff perceptions of the school environment.

Respect

Goodman (2009) explained that the term respect is used in various capacities within our daily vocabulary. Three of those examples are words that relate to respect, human dignity, equality, and autonomy. According to Goodman (2009), each of these terms leads to a deeper understanding into the philosophical roots of respect. Sensen (2009) suggested that "dignity is a certain type of value of human beings (p. 311). Sensen described these values using attributes such as absolute, inner, or unconditional. These attributes were meant to indicate that the value

of humans relies solely being human. As such people are simply valuable and precious and deserving of respect (Sensen, 2009). Goodman (2009) suggested that within an individual's sense of dignity, respect can surface and have a positive impact on others. Therefore, dignity is a positive aspect for human beings that is directly related to respect.

Goodman (2009) indicated that respect is connected to equality in that there is a universal acceptance of all people. Doing what is what is right, good or fair is associated with equality, while mistreatment, evil doing, or unfair treatment is associated with domination (Goodman, 2009). Lynch and Baker (2005) described five key dimensions that are vital to equality of conditions so that everyone can achieve a good life, those dimensions are:

1. Equality of resources, such as social capital like family, friends, and educational credentials;
2. Equal respect and recognitions, which is everyone achieving equal rights and opportunities as citizens in the country in which they live as well as a citizen of the world;
3. Equality of condition includes love, care, and solidarity, with care being a fundamental need for mental and emotional health that is necessary for normal human development;
4. Equality of condition to reduce power inequalities that provides support for traditions associated with liberal civil and political rights and less attention on property rights;
5. Equality of working and learning, with work playing an intricate role in all societies for building relationships of power and love, care, and solidarity.

These five dimension help to give a better perspective on how people can achieve a good life through the conditions of equality.

Autonomy, as a form of personal independence, is associated to respect in the school or educational environment because students and staff are encouraged to learn and present information in their own way. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) explained that students who are not given autonomy with support may not lack intrinsic motivation to succeed. According to Reeve and Jang (2006), autonomy support is a term that described interpersonal activities that a teacher may use to foster a student's internally motivated actions. Students who are assigned to teachers who encourage autonomy with support have enhanced interest for the lesson while the opposite may be true for students whose teachers are controlling. When teachers allow students to be autonomous, students take a greater interest in the classroom, activities and developing positive interactions with others (Reeve & Jang, 2006).

The climate in many schools can be positively or negatively affected by the presence or absence of respect among the stakeholders. Fasching-Varner (2006) explained that respect, or the lack respect, often is used as a building block to describe relationships. Respect is a necessary factor in leader and subordinate relationships, such as school board/administrator, administrator/teacher, and teacher/student interactions (Fasching-Varner, 2006). Langdon and Preble (2008) suggested that respect, or the lack of respect, is directly related to school bullying. A school with a climate that does not promote respect among students and staff is more likely to report greater numbers of bullying. The term respect has multiple meanings in a school setting, including consideration of human dignity, autonomy, and/or equality (Goodman, 2009). These three areas of respect can impact relationships among all stakeholders, including students and adults.

Adults deal with issues related to respect or disrespect as much as students. The manner in which adults are treated in the work place is important to the success of the school. Beaudoin

(2011) explained a lack of respect could result in increased stress levels among teachers and administrators. In addition, teachers who experience a lack of respect from students or other adults can become unhappy and feel unsupported that result in negative attitudes toward students and/or other adults. School administrators are willing to put resource and funds behind many initiatives or programs, such as bully prevention. However, these programs do not focus on the wellbeing of the adult staff who work with students on a daily basis (Beaudoin, 2011). This lack of support from the district can have an adverse reaction on the staff as a whole and lead to a lack of tolerance when working with disrespectful students.

Social emotional wellbeing of the students also can be a reflection of the level of respect that is displayed in the building. Langdon and Preble (2008) explained that the level of respect has a substantial effect on the extent of bullying and mistreatment present in a school. Programs have been established to help intervene in problems associated with bullying in schools. Beaudoin (2011) explained that school resources, including staffing and funding, has been spent on programs to combat the bullying problems in schools. By creating a strong climate that includes mutual respect among students and staff could help with managing unacceptable behaviors.

Conclusion

The perceptions of school safety varies among students, with one group of students viewing a situation as unsafe while another group of students seeing the same situation as normal and safe. Staff members also have perceptions regarding safety issues with the school that may be determined by the behaviors of students and reactions of administrators in response to those

behaviors. Voight et al. (2013) asserted that a healthy school climate positively affects student academic achievement, influences graduation rates, and promotes good student behavior.

Nassar-McMillan, Karvonen, Perez, and Abrams (2009) indicated that school climate is an important factor in determining the final goal of success for all of students. The school stakeholders influence the school climate, because each stakeholder brings his/her experiences to the school, and the interaction of these experiences contributes to a healthy environment in the school. Because of the importance of school climate on academic outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and student and staff safety, assessing the type of climate becomes important.

Measuring school climate is a good practice to assess the school environment. The discussion regarding school climate began more than 100 years ago, with researchers assessing school climate starting in the 1950s (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Thapa et al. 2013). Many instruments have been developed to measure school climate. Some of these instruments include, but are not limited to the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), National American School Climate Survey, U.S. Department of Education School Climate Survey (EDSCLS), and Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (School Climate Survey Compendia, n.d.). Each of the validated and reliable instruments have been tested to make accurate assessments of school climate.

Different researchers indicate specific factors that contribute to school climate. For example, Noonan (2004) listed seven factors that affect school climate (models, consistency, depth, democracy, community, engagement, and leadership; Noonan, 2004). The seven factors have a more in-depth meaning related to what makes a successful school climate. With the exception of engagement, staff members through their efforts are responsible for the remaining factors needed for a successful climate. Modeling, being consistent, depth in maintaining the

behind the scenes of the school, community engagement, and leadership are duties of the teachers and support staff in the building. Students can identify when many of these are not up to the proper standards.

According to Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009), four dimensions of school climate should be present when establishing a strong or healthy school climate. The four dimensions are environmental-structural, teaching and learning, relationships, and safety. Each of these four factors play important roles in maintaining a positive school climate.

Environmental-structural is the everyday operations of the building that include two categories, school engagement and physical layout of the building (Thapa et al., 2013). The second dimension is teaching and learning. Zullig et al. (2010) suggested that teaching and learning were the academic outcomes of the school. These outcomes include recognizing successful students and student and teacher satisfaction within the building. Teaching and learning has four subdimensions, leadership, quality of instruction, social emotional and ethical learning, and professional development which go a bit more in-depth in the teaching and learning. Cohen et al. (2009) separated the third dimension in to three subdimensions: respect for diversity, school community collaboration, morale and connectedness. Each of the subsections helps create meaningful relationships in school. Ramelow et al. (2015) asserted that two major parts of school safety are physical safety, (ensuring the staff, students and parents feel safe in the building) and social-emotional safety, (displaying all rules and dealing with conflicts that arise). The four dimensions are important to establishing a healthy school climate which in turn promotes student academic success.

A study by Bradshaw et al. (2014), uses three dimensions, engagement, safety, and environment, to define school climate. Each of these dimensions are further divided into

subdimensions. Figure 4 presents the United States Department of Education (USDOE) model of school climate described by Bradshaw et al. (2014).

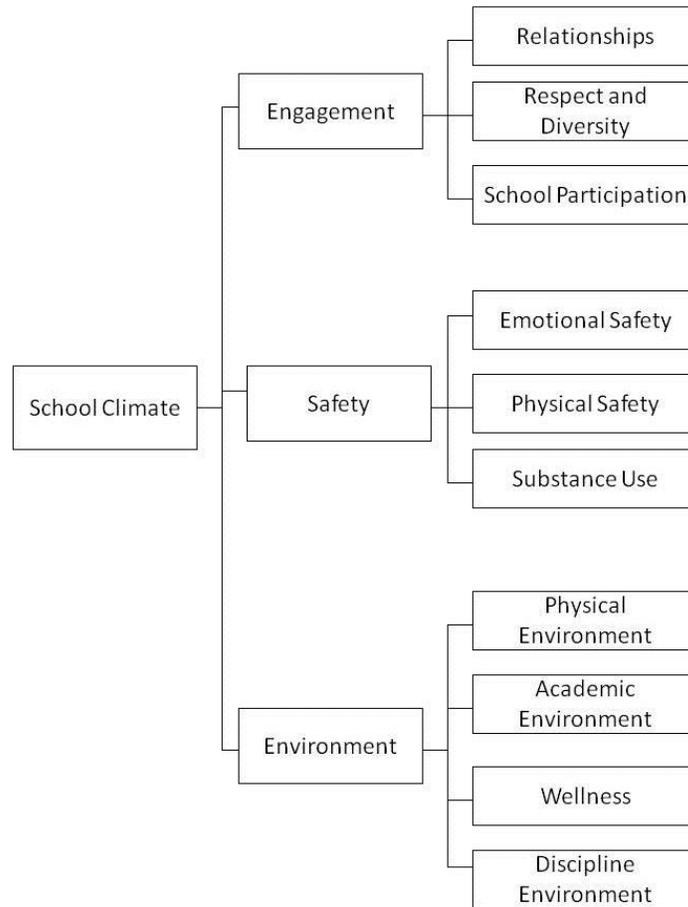


Figure 4. Dimensions and Subdimensions of School Climate (Bradshaw et al., 2014)

In history, an event shaped how stakeholders view school safety in the current society. Heath et al. (2007) explained that in 1851 a false fire alarm in a school was the cause of 40 students who died while trying to exit the building. Throughout the next 100 years, serious disasters take place that involve the death of some of the students and staff. These events help to shape the opinions of the stakeholders of school safety. Heath et al. (2007) explains that the Governor of New York required all schools to have fire drills to practice exiting the building in

the case of a fire or flood or any reason the student body would need to leave the school building. Today in Michigan public schools are required to do at least five fire drills, two tornado drills.

As far back as 1927 in Bath City, Michigan an individual had attempted and in many cases been successful in killing or harming students and staff members (Lindle, 2008). Since the incident in Bath City, Michigan multiple events have taken place than more recently the shooting at Columbine in 1999, the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, and the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting. Each of these incidents has brought more attention to school safety, two of these incidents the assailants were students of the school. The government responded to each event, schools were mandated to do lock down drills for active shooters, the Governor of Virginia signed an executive order that required different databases to communicate on students that may be mentally ill.

NSCC (2016) explains rules and addresses issues on violence, verbal abuse, teasing and harassment. Norms are clear and consistent routines that take place during the school day. Five different types of rules are rational, structuring, protecting, personal, and etiquette (Thornberg, 2008). The rules maintain order in the school and help to create a positive school climate. Smetana (2006) explains norms as a way of life such as etiquette or manners. Rules and norms is just of the major dimension that are important to maintaining at safe school environment.

Hernandez et al. (2010) explains a safe and secure environment is a basic requirement for a child to have healthy human development. Physical safety is the sense that the adults and student feel safe when they are in they are in the building (NSCC, 2016). Schools that have higher security measure to keep that students safe may also make the students and staff have an unsafe perception of the school (Gastic, 2010). NCLB (2001) was to increase student achievement and make sure students are safe while attending school.

Social-emotional security is seeing the students are safe from verbal cruelty, mockery and getting left out (NSCC, 2016). Bacchini et al. (2009) bullying infringes on the students social-emotional security because it is an intentional deliberate act of harassing someone over a period of time. Due to the result of some students taking their own lives this dimension has become very important to maintain a safe school environment. Thompson et al. (2006) explains when students are connected at school they are less like to commit suicide or do harm to themselves.

School climate and school safety rely heavily on the perceptions of the student and the teachers. Teacher's perceptions rest solely on their experiences at the school and the relationship with the administrator. Student perceptions are from the experiences they have had while in the school, how the staff and other students treat them shapes their thought of the building. This also helps to persuade what others outside think of the school.

Conceptual Model

School climate is an indicator of the effectiveness of a school in providing a quality education in a safe environment for all students. School climate has been divided into three dimensions, school safety, social-emotional security, and environment. School safety entails physical safety and emotional safety. As shown in the literature, a student who does not feel safe in a school cannot be expected to learn. Social emotional security is being free of concerns about bullying among students. In addition, respect among students and teachers is an important component of social emotional security. The physical environment and discipline are parts of school environment that contributes to school climate. When all of the components of school climate are in place, students and staff are able to be engaged in teaching and learning and school quality improves.

Student safety is an important topic in school today. Teacher and student perceptions of school safety have tremendous impact on student achievement. Figure 6 shows how safety, a dimension of school climate, is an important component along rules and norms, social emotional security and physical security in determining how teachers and students perceive school safety and how this all impact student achievement. School safety can determine how the students and teachers perform in the school daily.

School safety is one of the major dimensions of school climate along with teaching and learning, relationships, and environmental-structural dimensions (Cohen et al., 2009). The three areas of school safety are rules and norms, physical security and social emotional security and each of the components has a profound impact on the students and teacher's perception of the school (NSCC, 2016).

Maslow hierarchy of needs lists physiological needs as the first basic need and safety is the second followed by belonging and love, esteems and finally self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Safety is listed as the second basic need because it is important for people to have the sense of safety. When the sense of safety is met, the remainder of Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be addressed. Therefore, concerns about school safety can influence students' academic achievement and teachers' ability to perform their jobs in the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to compare perceptions of teachers and students on two measures of school climate: school safety and respect. If a statistically significant difference is found on these measures, recommendations can be made on how to minimize the discrepancies.

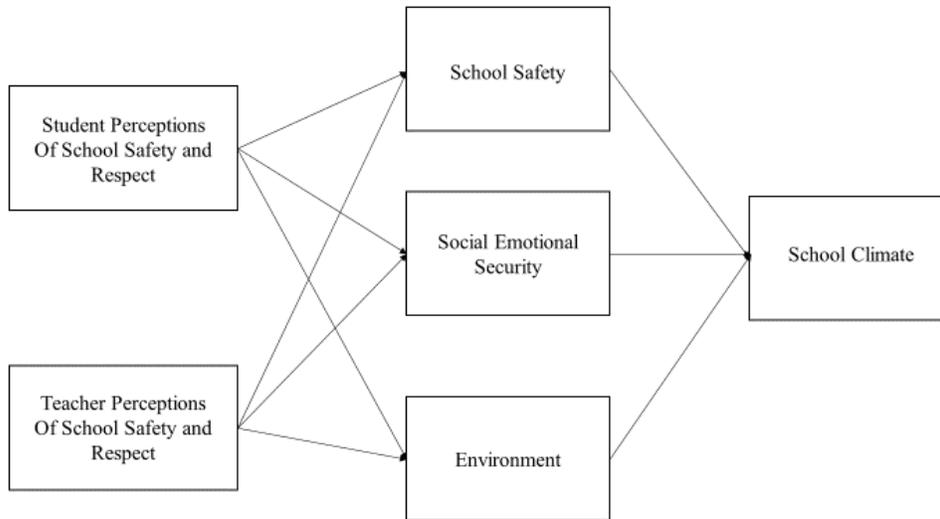


Figure 5. Conceptual Model of Student and Teacher Perceptions of School Climate

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology that will be used to describe the sample, address the research questions, and test the associated hypotheses. The topics that are included in this chapter are the research design, a description of the population and the sample, instrumentation, variables in the study, data collections procedures, and data analysis.

Restatement of the Purpose

Student safety is important to all stakeholders in education. Research shows that by improving the school climate students perform better (National School Climate Council [NSCC], 2007). A paucity of research was found that examined the perceptions of safety and respect between teachers and students. The purpose of this quantitative study is to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety, respect in school, and how the perceptions compare to the school ranking within 31 Michigan suburban high schools. The following research questions inform this study:

1. Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?
2. Is there a difference in perceptions of school respect between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?
3. Is there a difference in school safety among the four quadrants of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?
4. Is there a difference in school respect among the four quadrants of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?

5. To what extent is there a relationship between school safety and respect for students?
6. To what extent is there a difference in school safety and respect between freshman and senior students?

Research Design

A non-experimental descriptive research study will be used for this study because the data has been previously collected and the independent variable cannot be manipulated (Muijs, 2012). Creswell (2009) explained that quantitative research is a method of examining objective theories by identifying the variables and their relationship. According to Muijs (2012), non-experimental quantitative research can use a variety of approaches, including survey research, longitudinal studies, and analyzing existing data sets. Descriptive research designs are used to describe phenomenon as they exist at a specific point of time (Vogt & Johnson, 2011). Although the design is descriptive, inferential statistical analyses are appropriate to determine the existence of differences or associations in the data. The data for this study were obtained from a survey to determine the climate of each high school in a large urban county. Each school year, the Intermediate School District (ISD) distributes surveys to the local school districts that then collect the data from staff and students.

Setting for the Study

Data were collected in a Michigan suburban county with 31 high schools in 21 districts. The districts in the southern portion of the county are more diverse, due to the socioeconomic and ethnic differences, than northern districts. Each of these districts present with unique issues, challenges, and demands. The student populations in these high schools vary from 200 students and 15 staff members to more than 2,000 students and over 100 staff members. Each high

school has special security concerns pertaining to the building and grounds. Many high schools have a police officer on staff with security guards at other high schools. Each district also has different financial concerns that can impede the ability to implement specific safety measures that more affluent districts may already have in place.

The safety measures in use at each high school represent the concerns of that building constituents as well as the financial status of the district. Their concerns may range from students bringing firearms or weapons into the building to students using drugs and selling them in the building. Other schools are dealing with theft of personal items and problems exist among differing ethnic groups in the building. Because of these different concerns student centered safety programs depend on the need of the students in the school.

Programs that help manage student behavior of the also differ for each building. The program used in a school depends on the number of staff members the school available to maintain the plan. Some schools are staffed with a dean of students who is the school disciplinarian, while others use the assistant principal or the head principal to handle discipline problems. Additional schools have a room where students who misbehave or commit minor student code infractions are sent to reflect on the event that occurred, and then develop a plan to modify behavior in the future. This room is sometimes called a responsibility or time-out room. A student is supposed to reflect. Each school may have different programs that are dependent on the unique needs in each building.

Population

The population for this study consists of students and staff at 31 high schools in a large Michigan county. This county is home to urban, suburban, and rural areas. All students in

9th through 12th grades are eligible to complete the survey as are all teachers in these grades. No inclusion or exclusion criteria had been established for participation by either the teachers or the students. However, professional ancillary staff (e.g., psychologists, counselors, social workers) and paraprofessionals were excluded from the study. Approximately 46,000 students were available to complete the study. The number of teachers working in the county is not available. The survey was completed during the 2011-2012 school year. The survey, created by county intermediate school district administrators, was sent to all high schools in the county and participants include students and teachers who chose to participate.

Sample

A convenience sample of high school teachers and students was used with this study. While all of the students and teachers were encouraged to participate in the survey, participation was voluntary. A volunteer participation sample gives every person within the study an equal opportunity to have their information part of the data set (Muijs, 2004). A total of 14,435 students and 1,257 teachers completed the surveys. Based on student enrollment data for the 2011-2012 school year, a 31% response rate was established for the students. Although the survey is open to all students, students in the 11th grade may not have participated due to the state-mandated tests being completed at the same time. As a result, freshman and seniors have the highest presence in the results, with fewer sophomores and no juniors included in the data. Table 1 presents the number of students who participated by grade level.

Table 1. Students in the 2011-2012 School Year

Grade Level	Number	Percentage
9 th	6,753	46.8
10 th	1,717	11.9
11 th	0	0.0
12 th	5,965	41.3
Total	14,435	100.0

This survey occurs annually, the MISD sends the survey to each school district, which is then responsible for administering and collecting the data. The objective of the survey was to have participation from all schools which helps represent the broad spectrum and representation from all schools and districts within the county.

Data Collection

Pre-existing data will be used for this study. A survey developed by the Intermediate School District is distributed to each of the high schools in a single county for students and teachers to complete. The paper and pencil survey is distributed to high school principals at the end of the fourth quarter of the school year.

The high school principal is responsible for having the survey completed by the teachers and students. At a staff meeting, the principal distributes the surveys to the teachers. They are told that participation is voluntary and that their responses will be confidential. The teachers complete and return their surveys to the principal. The principal also distributes surveys to teachers in a required class at each grade level (e.g., English or Health) for students to complete. The teachers are given a time frame to have the students complete the survey (e.g., one week) who are told that participation is voluntary. They collect the surveys from the students and give

them to the principal who is responsible for returning the completed survey to the intermediate school district. The principal is allowed to retain a copy for their records. The personnel at the intermediate school district analyze the data and create a report for each school district and for the county as a whole. Each school receives a copy of the report for their school district and for the county. The school district is able to use the data as they see fit, (e.g., to monitor the progress of the school improvement plan and implement school improvement goals).

To gain access to the data from Intermediate School District, the researcher wrote a letter to the assistant superintendent requesting permission to use the data for research purposes. The letter explained the purpose of the study. The assistant superintendent agreed to allow the researcher have the data from the survey for the 2011-12 school year. The assistant superintendent sent the data to the researcher via email. The researcher upon receipt of the data, downloaded to a password protected file on his computer.

Instrumentation

Two complementary surveys were used for this study to measure school climate. The survey is used to identify the climate and the overall culture of the schools as it relates to the students and the teachers. The surveys were developed by the Intermediate School District in the county where the study was conducted. The surveys were different, but had some similar items. The teacher survey had 38 items and the student survey had 60 items. The teachers and students rated each of the items using a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. While the survey has been used for multiple years, no information is available on the reliability and validity of the items. For the purpose of the present study, three items that are

included on both the teacher and student survey will be used for this study. The three items are on the student survey:

- 21. I am not bullied by other students;
- 22. I feel safe at school;
- 24. Students respect each other, including those who are different.

The same three questions from the teacher survey will be used:

- 21. Students are not bullied by other students;
- 22. Students feel safe at school; and
- 24. Students respect each other, including those who are different.

Top to Bottom List

The Top-to-Bottom list in Michigan ranks schools using results of several different criterion-referenced measures, including mathematics, reading, science, social studies and writing. The rankings are used to generate a list that is mandated by the federal government to categorize schools as: Reward, Focus, Priority, and undesignated schools (Michigan Department of Education, n.d.). The rankings were developed to fulfill the requirement for the No Child Left Behind flexibility waiver (MDE, n.d.).

Reward schools can be designated in four ways:

- School is in the top 5% of the Top-to-Bottom ranking.
- School has been designated as a “Beating the Odds” school (i.e., a school that outperforms schools with risk factors and demographic characteristics of similar schools)

- School is in the top 5% of schools on the improvement metric in the Top-to-Bottom ranking.
- School has shown continuous improvement that extends past the 2022 proficiency targets (beginning in 2013; MDE, n.d.)

Focus schools are schools with the greatest gaps in achievement as defined as the discrepancy between the average scale scores for the highest performing 30% of students and the lowest performing 30% of students. This designation is determined by the achievement gap component in the Top-to-Bottom ranking (MDE, n.d.).

Priority schools are schools in the bottom 5% of the Top-to-Bottom list. These schools include:

- The official algorithm requires that Michigan include the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools. If 5% of the state's Title I schools are not included in the bottom 5% overall (i.e., too few Title I schools in that group), the cutoff is set in the Top-to-Bottom list to a level that includes 5% of the total Title I schools (MDE, n.d.).
- A school that received a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in 2010 or 2011 to develop a turnaround model is designated as a priority school. This grant was based on student achievement data from 2007-2009, with school receiving the SIG identified as persistently low-achieving (PLA; MDE, n.d.).
- A school identified as PLA in 2010 or 2011 was designated as a priority school. Identification was based on proficiency levels and academic improvement rates for English language arts and mathematics; if a school is in corrective action, in the process of restructuring,; and if a secondary school has a graduation rate below 60%. All previous PLA schools are designated as Priority schools during the process of

developing or implementing their reform plans as a result of being included on the PLA list. Schools can be designated as a priority school for four years (MDE, n.d.)

For the purpose of this study, the percentiles on the top-to-bottom list for schools in the targeted county will be used as an independent variable. The percentiles will be divided into four categories, using 25th, 50th, and 75th percentages as cut points, by listing the schools from highest to lowest percentile and then dividing into four groups of eight schools three of the groups and seven schools in the fourth.

Data Analysis

The data from the assistant superintendent were uploaded into SPSS for analysis using IBM-SPSS ver. 24. As a discrepancy exists in the number of students ($n = 14,435$) and teachers ($n = 1,257$), a random sample of approximately 1,300 students were used. IBM-SPSS ver. 24 has a data tool to randomly sample a specific number of cases from a data set. Mean scores for the entire student sample were obtained for the three items that were used in the analysis. After creating a new data set with the 1300 students, mean scores were calculated and compared to the original sample. If these scores are not statistically significant different, the new data set was used to address the research questions.

Descriptive statistics were obtained for demographic characteristics of the students. The student survey obtained information on the gender, living arrangements, and grade in school. These analyses used frequency distributions to summarize the responses to the three questions. No demographic characteristics were included on the teacher survey

The schools were grouped on school performance using the top-to-bottom list. A percentile rank was given to each school based on criteria from the state. The rankings are from 1

to 99. To develop the four quadrants, the schools' rankings were listed from highest to lowest. They were divided into four quadrants, with each quadrant having eight schools.

Six research questions will be addressed in the data analysis. Each of these questions was tested using inferential statistical analyses, with all decisions on the statistical significance of the findings made using a criterion alpha level of .05. Table 2 presents the statistical analyses that were used to test each research question.

Table 2. Statistical Analysis Test for each Research Question

Research Question	Variables	Statistical Analysis
1. Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u> Perceptions of school safety</p> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Respondent group Teachers Students</p>	Mann-Whitney tests for two independent samples were used to determine if perceptions of school safety differ between students and teachers
2. Is there a difference in perceptions of school respect between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u> Perceptions of respect</p> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Respondent group Teachers Students</p>	A Mann-Whitney test for two independent samples was used to determine if perceptions of respect differ between students and teachers
3. Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u> Perceptions of school safety</p> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Four Quadrants of schools in top-to-bottom list of school performance</p>	<p>Separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine if perceptions of school safety differ among the schools in the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list.</p> <p>If statistically significant differences was found on the ANOVA, Tukey post hoc tests were used to test all possible pairwise comparisons to determine which level of the top-to-bottom list was contributing to the statistically significant difference in perceived school safety</p>

Table 2. Statistical Analysis Test for each Research Question (continued)

Research Question	Variables	Statistical Analysis
4. Is there a difference in school respect among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u> Perceptions of respect</p> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Four Quadrants of schools in top-to-bottom list of school performance</p>	<p>A one-way analysis of variance was used to determine if perceptions of respect differed among the schools in the three levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list.</p> <p>If a statistically significant difference was found on the ANOVA, Tukey post hoc tests were used to test all possible pairwise comparisons to determine which level of the top-to-bottom list was contributing to the statistically significant difference in perceived respect</p>
5. To what extent is there a relationship between school safety and respect for students?	<p><u>Variables</u></p> <p><u>School safety</u> <u>School respect</u></p>	<p>Pearson product moment correlations were used to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between school safety and school respect</p>
6. To what extent is there a difference in school safety and respect between freshman and senior students?	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u> <u>School safety</u> <u>School respect</u></p> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> <u>Grade Level</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Freshman</u> • <u>Senior</u> 	<p>Separate t-tests for two independent samples were used to determine if perceptions of school safety and school respect differ between freshman and senior students.</p>

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?

This research question compared student and teacher responses on the survey items related to school safety. The type of respondent, student or teacher, was used as the independent variable, with the responses on the two survey items measuring perceptions of school safety used as the dependent variable in separate Mann-Whitney tests for two independent samples. This type of analysis is appropriate when the assumptions of t-tests for two independent samples are

not met. These assumptions are: (a) the scaling of the dependent variable is at least ordinal; (b) the independent variable is categorical with two levels; and (c) observations are independent. In addition, the dependent variable has no significant outliers in the two. The data were checked and it was determined that the variables did not meet the assumption of normality for the t-test for two independent samples. As a result, a Mann-Whitney test for independent samples was substituted.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in perceptions of school respect between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?

The research question compared the perceptions of students and teachers on respect. A t-test for two independent samples was used to test this research question. The dependent variable was the responses to the survey item measuring perceptions of respect, with the respondent type, teacher or student, used as the independent variable. The data were tested using the same assumptions as in Research Question 1. As the data violated the assumptions, a Mann-Whitney test for independent samples was used instead.

Research Question 3: Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?

Separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine if there was a difference on the two items measuring perceived school safety between teachers and students. The dependent variables in this analysis were responses to the two items measuring school safety, with the role of the respondent, teacher or student, used as the independent variable. An ANOVA is used when comparing more than one dependent variable among two or more levels of an independent variable. Prior to completing the ANOVA, the data were tested to determine if it meets the assumptions of ANOVA. These assumptions include: (a) the scaling of the

dependent variable is continuous (interval or ratio), (b) a categorical variable has at least two levels, and (c) observations are independent. Additional assumptions associated with ANOVA include: data does not have any significant outliers in the groups of your independent variable in terms of the dependent variable, data is normally distributed for each group of the independent variable, and, and the data has been drawn from populations with equal variances for each level of the independent variable. The data were tested to ensure that the data met the assumptions for ANOVA. If statistically significant differences are found on the four levels of the categorical independent variable, Tukey post hoc tests were used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons.

Research Question 4: Is there a difference in school respect among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare responses on the item measuring respect among students by the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list on school performance. The dependent variable was the responses to the item measuring respect, with the levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list used as the independent variables. The same primary assumptions listed under Research Question 3 were tested for this analysis. Additional assumptions associated with ANOVA include: data does not have any significant outliers in the groups of your independent variable in terms of the dependent variable, data is normally distributed for each group of the independent variable, and, and the data has been drawn from populations with equal variances for each level of the independent variable. If a statistically significant difference is found on the omnibus F test, Tukey post hoc tests were used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons.

Methodology Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of the study are that the researcher is using an existing data set and was not present when the survey was administered and is unaware of any inconsistencies in the administration of the survey. The study was limited to the number of high schools in the targeted county. The county may not be representative of other counties in the state of Michigan. While the same survey has been used for a number of years, the reliability and validity has not been established.

Delimitations of the study are that the original data collection was completed in 31 high schools in the targeted county. All teachers and students at all grade levels (9th through 12th) were eligible to participate in the survey, although participation was voluntary.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this quantitative study is to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety, respect in school, and how the perceptions compare to the school ranking within 31 Michigan suburban high schools.

This chapter reveals the results of the statistical analyses used to describe the sample and address the research questions. The data used in this study were previously collected by a large intermediate school district to obtain information regarding the school climate. The Intermediate School District in a large county in Michigan distributed teacher and student surveys to principals at 31 high schools at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. The principal distributed the surveys to teachers and ninth, tenth, and twelfth grade students. Students in the eleventh grade were not included in the study as they were involved with completing standardized testing required by the state. A total of 1,228 teachers and 14,116 students completed their surveys.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section uses descriptive statistics to provide the demographic characteristics of students who participated in the original research. The second section details the results of the inferential statistical analyses used to address each research question.

The students indicated their grade and gender on the survey. Information was not available on teachers' demographics. To reduce the number of students to a size comparable to the teachers, a random sample of 1,228 students was taken from the original sample. The two samples ($N = 14,116$ and $N = 1,228$) were cross tabulated separately to provide assurances that the smaller sample had similar percentages of students at each grade level than the full sample. The responses regarding grade and gender for the full sample were cross tabulated to provide

information regarding the demographics of the students included in the study. Table 3 presents results of this analysis.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation: Student Gender by Grade (Full Sample)

Grade in School	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ninth	3,391	47.5	3,200	45.9	6,591	46.7
Tenth	846	11.9	838	12.0	1,684	11.9
Twelfth	2,900	40.6	2,941	42.1	5,841	41.4
Total	7,137	100.0	6,979	100.0	14,116	100.0

$\chi^2(2) = 4.09, p = .13$

The largest number of students ($n = 7,137$ were males. Of this number, 3,391 (47.5%) were in the 9th grade, 846 (11.9%) were in the 10th grade, and 2,900 (40.6%) were in the 12th grade. Of the 6,979 female students included in the study, 3,200 (45.9%) were in the 9th grade, 838 (12.0%) were in the 10th grade, and 2,941 (42.1%) were in the 12th grade. A chi-square test for independence was used to determine if gender was dependent on grade. The results of this analysis were not statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 4.09, p = .13$), providing evidence that gender was independent of grade. Figure 6 presents the distribution of students by grade for the full sample.

To equalize the number of students and teachers in the study, a random subsample of 1,228 students was taken using IBM-SPSS. To determine if the random subsample was similar to the full sample, cross-tabulations by gender and grade were completed for the sample. Table 4 presents results of this analysis.

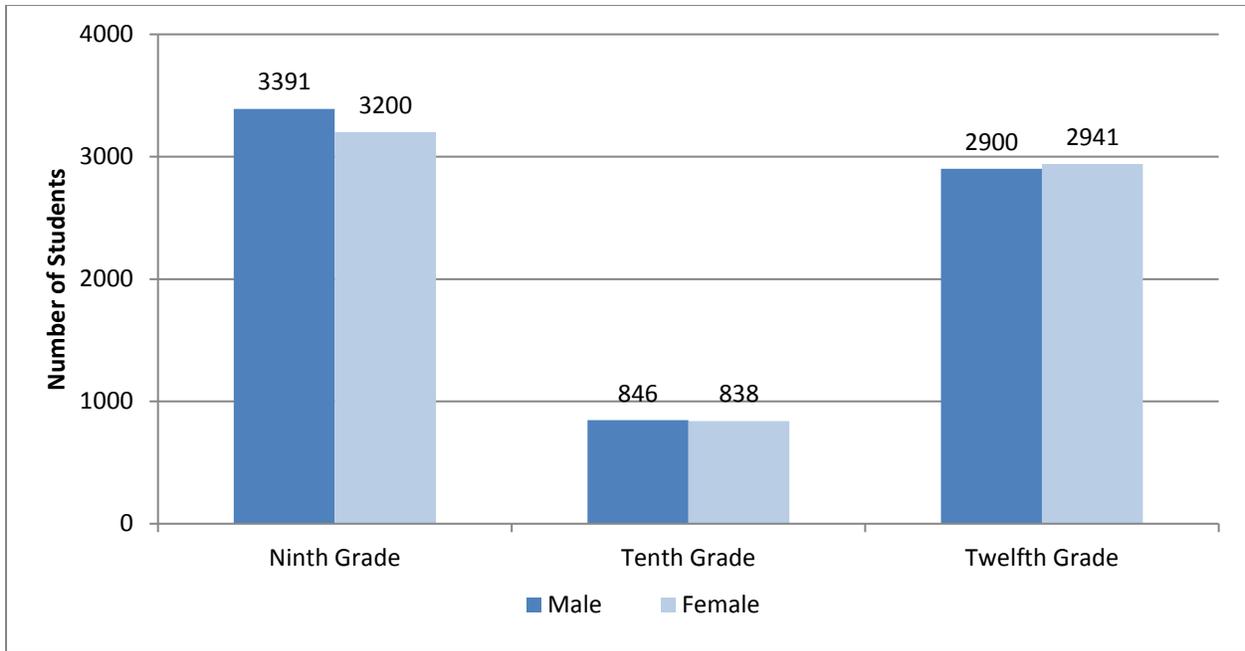


Figure 6. Students' Grade by Gender (Full Sample)

Table 4. Cross-tabulations: Student Random Sample Gender by Grade (Random Subsample)

Grade in School	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ninth	294	47.0	285	47.3	579	47.1
Tenth	68	10.9	68	11.4	136	11.1
Twelfth	263	42.1	250	41.5	513	41.8
Total	625	100.0	603	100.0	1,228	100.0

$\chi^2(2) = 0.08, p = .96$

A total of 625 male students were included in the random sample. Of this number, 294 (47.0%) were in the 9th grade, 68 (10.9%) were in the 10th grade, and 263 (42.1%) were in the 12th grade. Of the 603 female students in the random sample, 285 (47.3%) were in the 9th grade, 68 (11.4%) were in the 11th grade, and 250 (41.5%) were in the 12th grade. The chi-square test for independence provided no evidence of a statistically significant difference in gender by grade, $\chi^2(2) = 0.08, p = .96$. A comparison of the original sample and the subsample show the

similarity of percentages of male and female students at each grade level. Figure 7 presents the percentages of students at each grade level for the random sample and the original sample.

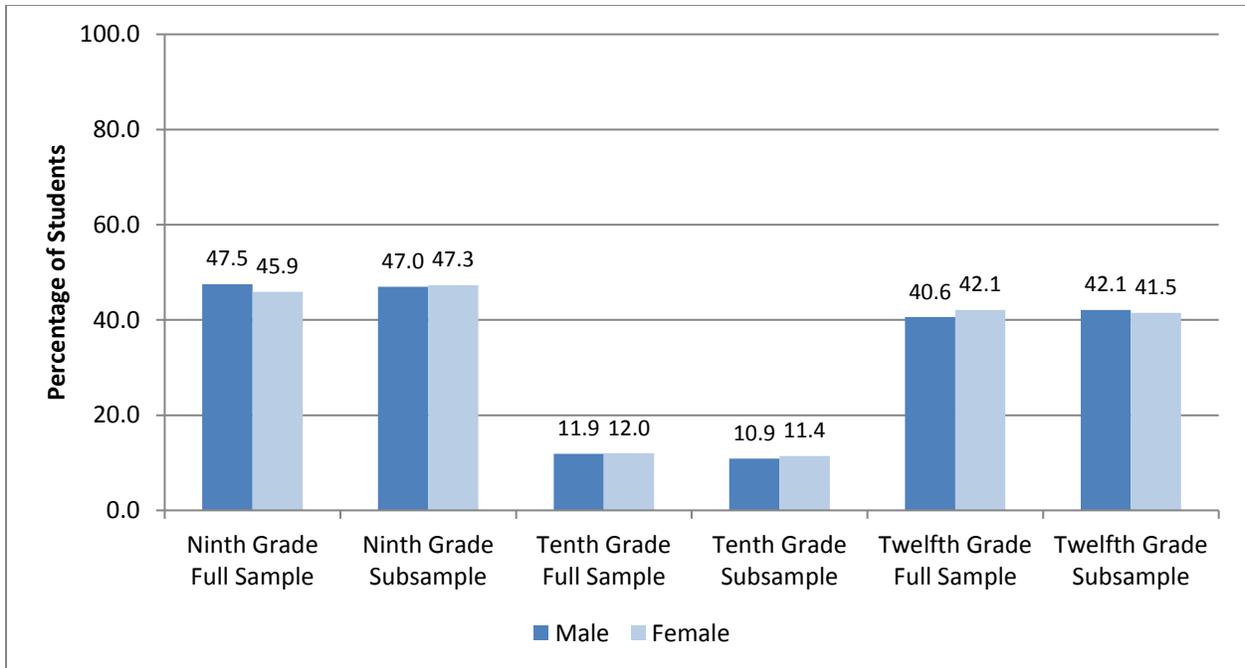


Figure 7. Comparison of Full Sample to Random Subsample by Grade and Gender

Although gender was not a variable in the study, reporting the gender provided further assurances that the percentages of responses from the students were similar in the full sample and the random subsample. The comparison of the percentages of students by grade and gender is important as male and female students may have responded differently. By maintaining similar percentages in each group, subsequent differences or relationships in the inferential tests were not a result of having over-representation of male or females in the study.

Preliminary Analysis of Dependent Variables

Three items on the complementary surveys (21, 22, and 24) were used as the dependent variables in the inferential analyses used to address the research questions. The first step was to

determine the shape of the distribution of responses on the three survey items. An explore command was used to determine the normality of the data on the three survey items used for the study. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics by respondent type.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics – Survey Items

Descriptive Statistics	I am not bullied by other students	Students are not bullied by other students	I feel safe at school.	Students feel safe at school	Students respect each other, including those who are different.	Students respect each other, including those who are different
	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher
Mean	1.76	2.53	1.93	1.99	2.77	2.18
Standard Deviation	.85	.64	.78	.52	.88	.60
Median	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Skewness	1.01	.02	.67	.36	-.20	.24
Kurtosis	.43	-.26	.23	2.22	-.74	.22

The scores for the first survey item, “I am not bullied by other students” had a mean of 1.76 (SD = .85), with a range from 1 to 4 for students and a mean of 2.53 (SD = .64), with a range of 1 to 4 for teachers. The scores for students were more positive than for teachers as the ratings were from 1 for strongly agree to 4 for strongly disagree. Therefore, lower mean scores provided evidence that students were less likely to perceive they were being bullied than teachers. The students’ scores were somewhat skewed (1.01), while the teachers were more normally distributed (.02). The kurtosis for this item differed between the students (.43) and the teachers (-.26) indicating that the shapes of the distribution of responses were different. The teachers had less variability in their responses than the students.

The second item, “I feel safe at school” had a mean score of 1.93 (SD = .78), with a range from 1 to 4 for students. Teachers had a mean score of 1.99 (SD = .52), with a range from 1 to 4. The students’ scores were more skewed (.67) than teachers (.36). The scores for kurtosis differed between students (.23) and teachers (2.22), indicating that the variability for teachers was less than the variability for students.

The final item, “Students respect each other, including those who are different,” differed for students (M = 2.77, SD = .88) and teachers (M = 2.18, SD = .60). Both skewness and kurtosis differed between students and teachers. The students’ scores for skewness were minimal (-.20), while the teachers were higher (.24). The scores for kurtosis for students (-.74) were lower than those obtained for the teachers (.22), indicating a difference in the distribution of responses for the students and teachers. Teachers had less variability on this item than the students.

Because of these differences in variability, the data did not meet the assumptions of t-tests for independent samples. Specifically, the samples were not drawn from populations with equal variances. Because the samples did not have homogeneity of variance, nonparametric statistics were used to address the first two research questions. The comparisons between students and teachers on the first and second research questions were made using Mann-Whitney tests for independent samples instead of the planned t-tests for two independent samples. The use of nonparametric analyses does not have to meet the assumptions of a normal distribution and equal variances between the two groups being compared.

Research Questions

Six research questions informed this study using inferential statistical analyses. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings were made using a criterion alpha level of .05.

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?

The responses to the two survey items measuring safety in the school were compared between teachers and students using a Mann-Whitney test for independent samples. The two items measuring school safety were used as the dependent variable, with the type of respondent used as the independent variable in this analysis. Scores on these items could range from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating strongly agree and 4 indicating strongly disagree. Lower scores indicate greater agreement with the statement. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Mann-Whitney Test for Independent Samples – School Safety by Type of Participants

Item	Group	Mean Rank	Z	Sig
I am not bullied by other students./ Students are not bullied by other students	Student	888.00	-24.06	<.001
	Teacher	1531.74		
I feel safe at school./Students feel safe at school	Student	1156.13	-4.12	<.001
	Teacher	1255.94		

A statistically significant difference was obtained for the item, “I am not bullied by other students” ($Z = -24.06$, $p < .001$). The teachers had a mean rank of 1531.74 which was significantly higher than the mean rank of 888.00 obtained for the students. Based on this finding, it appears that teachers perceived that students were being bullied by other students more than students did.

The comparison of teachers and students on the second survey item, “I feel safe at school,” produced a statistically significant result ($Z = -4.11, p < .001$). The mean rank for teachers (1255.94) was higher than the mean rank for students (1156.13). This finding provided evidence that students perceived the school environment was safer when compared to the teacher’ perceptions of safety.

Research Question 2. Is there a difference in perceptions of school respect between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?

The perceptions of respect as measured by the item, “Students respect each other, including those who are different,” was used as the dependent variable in a Mann-Whitney test for independent samples. The type of respondent was used as the independent variable in this analysis. Table 7 presents results of this analysis.

Table 7. Mann-Whitney Test for Independent Samples – School Respect by Type of Participants

Item	Group	Mean Rank	Z	Sig
Students respect each other, including those who are different.	Student	1421.56	-16.72	<.001
	Teacher	981.96		

The comparison of responses to the survey item, “Students respect each other, including those who are different” was statistically significant, ($Z = -16.72, p < .001$). The teachers had a significantly lower mean rank (981.96) than students (1421.56). This result provided support that teachers perceived more respect among students than students did.

Research Question 3. Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?

The top-to-bottom list of schools were divided into four groups by listing the schools from lowest to highest percentile rankings and categorizing them into four groups, using the 25th,

50th, and 75th percentile scores. Table 7 presents the number of teachers and students in schools in each of the four categories of schools.

Table 8. Categorization of the Included Schools Based on Top-to-Bottom Rankings

Category	Number	Percent
Low (1 to 25 th percentile)	3490	22.6
Low Moderate (26 th to 50 th percentile)	.3362	21.8
Moderate (51 st to 75 th percentile)	3426	22.2
High (76 th to 100 th percentile)	5159	33.4
Total	15437	100.0
Missing 255		

The four categories of schools were used as the independent variables in a one-way ANOVA. The dependent variables in this analysis were the responses to the two questions: “I am not bullied by other students” and “I feel safe at school.” The independent variable was the four categories of schools based on the top-to-bottom rankings. Table 8 presents the results of the ANOVA.

Table 9. One-way ANOVA – School Safety by Top-to-Bottom Rankings

Source	N	Mean	SD	DF	F	Sig	η^2
I am not bullied by other students./ Students are not bullied by other students							
	3490	1.90	.99	3, 15433	2.02	.109	<.01
Low	3362	1.85	.90				
Low Moderate	3426	1.87	.91				
Moderate	5159	1.85	.86				
High							
I feel safe at school./Students feel safe at school							
	3490	2.14 _{a,b,c}	.89	3, 15433	41.83	<.001	.01
Low	3362	2.02 _{a,d}	.81				
Moderate	3426	1.98 _b	.80				
High	5159	1.95 _{c,d}	.74				

Note: Means in a cell sharing a subscript was significantly different from each other. Lower means indicate greater agreement with the statement.

The results of the comparison of the item, I am not bullied by other students/students are not bullied by other students among the four categories of schools based on the top-to-bottom list was not statistically significant, $F(3, 15433) = 2.02, p < .109, \eta^2 < .01$. The small effect size (.01) provided evidence that the results had little practical significance. When the second statement, “I feel safe at school/students feel safe at school” was compared among the four categories, the results were statistically significant, $F(3, 15433) = 41.83, p < .001$. However, the small effect size (.01) indicated that the result had statistically significant, but little practical significance. To determine which of the four categories of school performance were contributing to the statistically significant result, Tukey’s post hoc tests were used to test all possible pairwise comparisons. When the mean scores were compared for the statement “I feel safe at school,” statistically significant differences were noted among the four categories. Schools in the lowest category ($M = 2.14, SD = .89$) differed significantly from schools in the low moderate category ($M = 2.02, SD = .81$), schools in the moderate category ($M = 1.98, SD = .80$), and schools in the high category ($M = 1.95, SD = .74$). Schools in the low moderate category differed from schools in the high category and schools in the moderate category differed from schools in the high category. No statistically significant differences were noted between the low moderate and moderate schools. When examining the mean scores, it appears that teachers and students in the schools in the high category felt their schools were safer than students in the other three categories.

Research Question 4. Is there a difference in school respect among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?

A one-way analysis of variance was used to determine if student and teacher scores for the item, “Students respect each other, including those who are different” differed by the four

categories of schools based on the top-to-bottom rankings. The independent variable in this analysis was the four categories of the schools based on the top-to-bottom list. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 9.

Table 10. One-way ANOVA – Students Respect Each Other Including Those who are Different by Top-to-Bottom Ratings(Full Sample – Students and Teachers)

Source	N	Mean	SD	DF	F	Sig	η^2
Students Respect Each Other Including Those who are Different							
Low	3490	2.75	.92	3, 15433	1.28	.278	<.001
Low Moderate	3362	2.71	.87				
Moderate	3426	2.74	.90				
High	5159	2.73	.86				

The comparison of the teachers’ and students’ responses to the item, “Students respect each other, including those who are different” by the four categories of schools based on the Top-to-Bottom list was not statistically significant, $F(3, 15433) = 1.28, p = .278, \eta^2 = <.01$. This finding provided support that regardless of the academic classification of the school on the top-to-bottom list, the responses to the item reflecting respect did not differ.

Research Question 5. To what extent is there a relationship between school safety and respect for students?

The teachers’ and students’ responses for the three items that were tested were correlated to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among school safety and student respect. Table 10 presents results of this analysis.

Table 11. Pearson Product Moment Correlations – School Safety and Student Respect (Full Sample – Students and Teachers)

	I am not bullied by other students.	I feel safe at school.	Students respect each other, including those who are different.
	r	r	r
I am not bullied by other students.			
I feel safe at school.	.41**		
Students respect each other, including those who are different.	.11**	.32**	

**p < .01

Statistically significant correlations in a positive direction were obtained between the measures of safety and student respect. The correlation between the item, “I am not bullied by other students” and “I feel safe at school” was .41 ($p < .001$). The correlation between “I am not bullied by other students” and “Students respect each other, including those who are different” was smaller ($r = .11$, $p < .001$). The correlation between “I feel safe at school” and “Students respect each other, including those who are different” was in a positive direction ($r = .32$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that school respect is related to feelings of being safe while at school.

Research Question 6. To what extent is there a difference in school safety and respect between freshman and senior students?

The three items that reflected perceptions of school safety and respect were used as the dependent variables in t-tests for two independent samples. The independent variable was grade level, with students in the ninth and twelfth grades included in the analysis. Table 12 presents results of this analysis.

Table 12. t-Tests for Two Independent Samples – School Safety and Respect by Grade in School

Source	N	M	SD	DF	t	p
I am not bullied by other students.						
Ninth	6,556	1.83	.90	12,361	7.82	<.001
Twelfth	5,807	1.71	.81			
I feel safe at school.						
Ninth	6,553	2.04	.80	12,347	9.43	<.001
Twelfth	5,796	1.91	.74			
Students respect each other, including those who are different.						
Ninth	6,553	2.77	.89	12,353	5.29	<.001
Twelfth	5802	2.69	.87			

The results of the t-test for two independent samples provided evidence of statistically significant differences for the three survey items. For the item, “I am not bullied by other students,” the result was statistically significant, $t(12361) = 7.82, p < .001$. The second item, “I feel safe at school” was statistically significant, $t(12,347) = 9.43, p < .001$. The item measuring student respect, “Students respect each other, including those who are different” was statistically significant, $t(12,353) = 5.29, p < .001$. To determine the direction of the differences, the mean scores for 9th and 12th grade students were compared.

An examination of the mean scores for the three items indicate that students in the twelfth grade had more positive perceptions of school safety and respect than ninth grade students. For the item, “I am not bullied by other students,” twelfth grade students had a mean of 1.71 (SD = .81) which was higher than the mean of 1.83 (SD = .90) obtained for the ninth grade students. The twelfth grade students (M = 1.91, SD = .74) also had higher scores for the item, “I feel safe at school” than the ninth grade students (M = 2.04, SD = .80). The item measuring perceptions of respect, “Students respect each other, including those who are different” was more positive for the twelfth grade students (M = 2.69, SD = .87) than the ninth grade students (M = 2.77, SD =

.89). These findings provide support that student perceptions of school safety and respect are more likely to change over the length of time a student has been in high school.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and how the perceptions compare to the school ranking within 31 Michigan suburban high schools. The study included 1,228 teachers and 14,116 students who completed a survey that was distributed by the intermediate school district in a large county in Michigan. The student participants included 6,591 in the ninth grade, 1,684 in the tenth grade, and 5,841 in the twelfth grade. No eleventh-grade students were included in the sample as they were involved in state mandatory testing at the same time. The sample included 7,137 male and 6,979 females.

Six research questions were posed for this study. The first research question examined differences in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students. To examine this difference, a random sample of 1,228 students from the 14,116 students in the total sample. The results of the Mann-Whitney test for independent samples were statistically significant for the two items, "I am not bullied by other students" and "I feel safe at school." Teachers perceived that students were being bullied by other students more than students. However, students perceived they were safer in school than the teachers.

The perceptions of student respect were the focus of the second research question. The results of the Mann-Whitney test for independent samples was statistically significant, indicating that teachers were more likely to perceive that students respected each other, including those who were different more than students.

The schools' state rankings were divided into four categories at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile. The four categories were used as the independent variable in separate one-way ANOVAs to address the third research question, "Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?" The scores on the two items measuring school safety were used as the dependent variables in these analyses. The findings indicated a statistically significant difference in the item "I feel safe at school," while the results of the one-way ANOVA for the item, "I am not bullied by other students" was not statistically significant. In further examining the means scores for the item, "I feel safe at school," statistically significant differences were found between the schools in the low categories and those in the low moderate, moderate, and high categories. While those in the low moderate and moderate categories had higher scores than those in the high category, there was no difference between the schools in the low moderate and moderate categories. These findings provided support that schools that had higher top-to-bottom rankings were more likely to be perceived as safer.

The fourth research question used the same four categories based on the top-to-bottom list as the independent variable in a one-way ANOVA. The perceptions of student respect were used as the dependent variable in this analysis. No statistically significant differences were found for this analysis, indicating that teachers' and students' perceptions of student respect were not substantially different.

The fifth research question examined the relationship between school safety and respect. Pearson product moment correlations were used to determine the strength and size of the relationships. The findings provided support of strong statistically significant relationships in a positive direction for the three items on the survey.

The ninth and twelfth grade students' perceptions of school safety and respect were compared using separate t-tests for independent samples. The results of these analyses were statistically significant for the three items. For each item, students in the twelfth grade had more positive perceptions of school safety and student respect than ninth grade students.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides a short summary of the study, results of the data analysis, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research on the topic. The chapter includes the interpretation of the findings, implications for policy and practice, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and conclusions. The purpose of this quantitative study is to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety, respect in school, and how the perceptions compare to the school ranking within 31 Michigan suburban high schools. The research questions that were addressed in this study include:

1. Is there a difference in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?
2. Is there a difference in perceptions of school respect between teachers and students in public high schools in a suburban Michigan county?
3. Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?
4. Is there a difference in school respect among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?
5. To what extent is there a relationship between school safety and respect for students?
6. To what extent is there a difference in school safety and respect between freshman and senior students?

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and how the perceptions compare to the top-to-bottom school ranking within 31 Michigan suburban high schools. The study included a total of 15,348 participants, including 1,228 teachers and 14,116 students who completed a survey during the 2011-2012 academic year. The intermediate school district in a large county in Michigan was responsible for distributing the survey to the 31 high schools in the county. The student participants included 6,591 in the ninth grade, 1,684 in the tenth grade, and 5,841 in the twelfth grade. The sample included 7,137 male and 6,979 females. Demographic data on the teachers were not available. Eleventh grade students were excluded from the study as they were completing state mandatory testing at the same time.

Key Findings

The six research questions addressed in this study were tested using inferential statistical analyses. Six key findings emerged from the analysis. These findings included students had more positive perceptions regarding school safety than teachers, teachers were more likely to feel that students respected each other than students, schools that had higher top-to-bottom rankings were more likely to be perceived as safer, teachers' and students' perceptions of student respect did not differ substantially, relationships between school safety and respect were statistically significant in a positive direction, and students in the twelfth grade had more positive perceptions of school safety and student respect than ninth grade students.

The first research question examined differences in perceptions of school safety between teachers and students. A statistically significant difference was found on the Mann-Whitney test for independent samples, indicating teachers and students differed on the two items, "I am not

bullied by other students” and “I feel safe at school.” Teachers perceived that students were bullied by other students more than students. In contrast, students perceived they were safer in school than the teachers. This finding was in contrast to national and state statistics reported by Kitsantas, Ware, and Martinez-Arias (2004) that indicated declines in the rate of violent behavior.

The finding that students’ responses regarding being bullied were significantly lower than teachers’ perceptions has been supported by previous literature on bullying. Olweus (1994) suggested that bullying can take many forms including physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. Students often are reluctant to report bullying for fear of reprisal from the bully and being ostracized by other students. Teachers and staff may be unaware that students are victims of bullying in their schools (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’ Brennan, 2007). However, in some cases, students may talk to teachers or administrators about being harassed, leading the adults in the school to be more aware of bullying than the nonaffected students in the school. In addition, cyberbullying is not limited to school hours and can occur in any location. Students may not report cyberbullying because of concerns that their parents may take their phones or other electronic devices away to keep them safe.

Three factors can affect students’ perceptions of being safe in their schools: (a) violence in the neighborhood where the school is located (Kitsantas et al., 2004), (b) the number of conflicts (real or imagined) that occur in the school (Derosier & Newcity, 2005), and (c) the extent to which substance abuse is present among the students (Kitsantas et al., 2004). Students perceptions that the schools were safe was consistent with their responses regarding being bullied. Teachers may have been more aware of the violence that was occurring in schools than students and reported not on their particular school specifically, but on the safety in schools in

general. In contrast to the findings of the present study, research by Ricketts (2007) found that teachers typically rated the school building safer than students. Booren, Handy, and Power (2009) compared teachers and students on their perceptions of safety in their schools. Teachers rated the school safer than students on four subscales, rule enforcement, education, control and surveillance, and counseling. Based on their findings, the researchers concluded that students should be included when procedures for school safety were being developed.

Perceptions of student respect were the focus of the second research question. The comparison of teacher and student responses was statistically significant, with teachers more likely to perceive that students respected each other, including those who were different more than students. After an extensive review of literature, no study was found that had directly compared students and teachers on student-to-student respect and acceptance. A study by King and Vidourek (2010) examined students' perceptions of school-based respect. They defined respect as treating others as you would like to be treated. However, the finding of their study suggested that many students felt disrespected by their peers, which was contributing to a negative school climate. King and Vidourek (2010) cited the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health that indicated students who were respected by their peers were less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drinking and using drugs, involvement in violent behaviors, and becoming depressed.

In the present study, students had negative perceptions of respect among students. Students were less likely to feel that the social climate in the schools promoted feelings of respect among the students. In contrast, a study by Patrick, Ryan, and Kaplan (2007) found that students who had positive perceptions of the social climate of their classroom were more likely to have positive outcomes. The social climate was associated with affiliation, cohesiveness,

fairness, mutual respect, and support from their peers. Support from peers differs from support from adults as adolescents have similar power in their relationships and help students by encouraging them to participate in classroom and school activities in ways that increase self-esteem and reduce anxieties. Patrick et al. (2007) asserted that mutual respect among students results in there being considerate of each others' feeling and minimizes teasing and bullying. When the classroom reflects respect among students and teachers, students become engaged in the learning and use self-regulated strategies more often.

The schools' state top-to-bottom rankings were used to divide the respondents from the 31 high schools into four categories at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile. The third research question was "Is there a difference in school safety among the four levels of schools in the top-to-bottom list of school performance?" A statistically significant difference was found for the item "I feel safe at school," while the results of the analysis for the item, "I am not bullied by other students" was not statistically significant. Students and teachers in schools included in the low moderate and moderate categories had higher scores than teachers and students in the high category.

Students need to feel safe at school if they are going to be able to concentrate on learning (Langdon & Preble, 2008). They found a relationship between bullying and academic performance that indicated when high incidences of bullying occur, academic performance of students is lower. After dividing the schools into high, medium, and low based on the prevalence of bullying and teasing in the schools, Lacey and Cornell (2013) indicated that schools with the lowest prevalent of bullying and teaching had the highest outcomes on the school standardized tests. This finding was supported in the present study that found that students in schools that

were in high performing schools (in the top 25% of schools in the county) were more likely to feel safe in their schools.

The fourth research question used the same four categories based on the top-to-bottom list as the independent variable. No statistically significant differences were found, indicating that teachers' and students' perceptions of student respect did not differ substantially. No prior research links student respect to academic achievement. Respect is considered to be part of school climate, with most research indicating that students who show greater respect to their fellow students are less likely to be bullied and feel safer in schools (Langdon & Preble, 2008). The present study that found that respect did not differ among the schools based on their academic rankings on the top-to-bottom list of high schools in the county. Respect appears to be related to feelings of safety and not academic achievement.

The fifth research question examined the relationship between school safety and respect. Using all teacher and student responses, the findings provided support of strong relationships in a positive direction for each of the three analyses. The positive relationship between school safety and respect indicated that students and teachers who perceived the school was a safe place and bullying was not a problem tended to show more peer respect including for others who were different. School climate is the "norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. People are engaged and respected" (Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D'Alessandro, & Gaffey, 2012; p. 2). According to Higgins-D'Alessandro and Sakwarawich (2011), students receiving special education services are more likely to feel safe in school if they feel respected by other students. This finding was supported by the positive relationship in the present study between school safety and respect among students, including those who are different. A statistically significant correlation was found in the present student

that indicated higher levels of student respect was associated with lower levels of bullying. This finding was consistent with research results from a study by Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez, and Robertson (2003) that showed schools that use programs that promote student-to-student respect have experienced decreased levels of bullying among their students.

The ninth and twelfth grade students' perceptions of school safety and respect differed significantly for each of the three items. For each item, students in the twelfth grade had more positive perceptions of school safety and student respect than ninth grade students. This result provided support that students' perceptions of school safety and respect become more positive over time in the school. Research on bullying indicates that bullying behaviors decrease as students mature (Scheihauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006). According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.), bullying tends to be greatest in the ninth grade as students make the transition from middle to high school and decreases through the twelfth grade. Students entering high school may bully to impress their peers and to mask their insecurity. As they progress to the twelfth grade, students mature and recognize that they can handle interpersonal conflicts without bullying or being aggressive.

Implications for Administrators, Policy, and Stakeholders

School climate is a combination of many factors, including school safety and respect. All stakeholders must collaborate and reach consensus on the factors that contribute to creating a positive school climate that encourages students to learn and teachers to teach. School safety, as measured in this study was perceived differently by students and teachers, with students perceiving the school as safer than the teachers. The lack of consensus between the two groups indicated a need to have open discussions on what is influencing this difference. Administrators

should consider holding a forum with all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and staff to discuss ways to improve student safety. This forum could result in discussions of locations where students do not feel safe, situations that contribute to these feelings, and strategies to make the school safer.

In addition to this forum, principals need to provide professional development for faculty and staff to address issues of bullying and school climate associated with safety. According to Charmaraman, Jones, Stein, and Esplage (2013), the professional development should provide information to distinguish between different types of bullying and include information on policies related to each type. The district policies should be reviewed with teachers and staff, with participants encouraged to make recommendations that could improve staff and student safety on the school grounds. Teachers and staff can provide input regarding development of disciplinary actions for fighting and physical bullying, sexual harassment, and cyber bullying. Issues associated with preparing for possible terrorist actions and other disasters should also be discussed in the professional development sessions.

The results identified teacher's perception the students as more respectful than the students perceive respect among students. Classroom environment is influenced by mutual respect among students that is encouraged by teachers (Patrick et al., 2007). Teachers need to be aware that the social interactions among students can improve classroom outcomes and reduce bullying behaviors both in and out of the school. Positive social interactions among students can help create a school climate that promotes the concept of safe and orderly schools (Patrick et al., 2007). The findings indicate that administrators must address respect among students in the entire county. At the county or ISD level, administrators should create a leadership program, with representation from all districts that focuses on the respect of students towards other

students. Student leaders as well as parents should be invited and encouraged to participate in the leadership group to help identify concerns of the students about respect of others.

Local districts must use the information from the county level while also working with the district stakeholders to focus on the problem as it relates to the district schools. Principals should use the information to focus on building climate using the findings to create a dialogue amongst the student body. The principal needs to use the leadership team to work with the rest of the staff to build a professional relationship, this would help the staff to gain a better understanding of the how the students relate to each other. Beaudoin (2011) explained that creating a strong school environment starts with strong professional relations amongst staff.

Teachers and students within the high category perceived their school as safer than the schools in the other three categories. District leadership, working with students and teachers, need to identify concerns regarding security. Meetings across the county should be held to establish the best practices from each district and school. This information should be used to help each district create or enhance a district wide security plan.

Students and teachers perceive little respect among students in all of the schools within the county. These findings reveal a large problem of respect within all the schools in the county. This problem needs to have a countywide approach, as well as possibly outside of the county professionals, to help resolve this problem of little respect among students. District leadership, city leadership, possibly the chamber of commerce, along with business leaders from various companies within the county can create a coalition with parents and students to address this problem. Involving external stakeholders helps to have a holistic approach to addressing student respect. Each district should have at least one representative for the coalition to report back to the district regarding the information discussed from the group. District leadership needs to

work with stakeholders on how to address this issue. If the district is financially capable, an outside individual or group can assist or give guidance on how this problem can be resolved. The buildings can use the information to institute various incentives to encourage the students to treat each other with more respect.

The perceptions of school safety and school respect changes over time among ninth to twelfth grade boys and girls. The finding indicates that throughout the county the ninth graders have a more negative perception of respect and safety. The information can be used to work with the incoming ninth graders to help them understand the importance of respect and safety within the building. Each district also needs to do more transition programs from middle school or junior high school to help ninth graders prepare for the next level of school. Principals in the county need to make sure that each grade level has a transition program that reiterates the importance of safety and respect throughout the building, this program will be available for new students to the building each year. As research has shown that the prevalence of bullying decreases as students mature, principals and counselors should consider setting up peer mentoring programs with seniors assigned to freshman to help them understand the negative outcomes of bullying(Scheihauer et al., 2006). These mentoring relationships might help reduce bullying incidents in the school and create a safer school climate.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the use of previously collected data. The data collection did not appear to be consistent across the county, with the principals responsible for distributing or not distributing the survey to their staff and students. Eleventh grade students were eligible to participate, but did not, possibly due to completing the Michigan Merit Exam at the

time when the survey was being administered. While bullying was a focus of the study, bullying through the use of technology was not specifically included in the survey items. At the time of data collection, cyberbullying may not have been as much of a concern as it is today. The survey was coded with a 1 indicating strongly agree and 4 indicating strongly disagree. The lower number indicated a more positive perception regarding the item and a higher number was indicative of a negative perception. Typically, higher numbers mean more positive and lower numbers are negative. Participants may not have answered correctly because of the scale used to respond to each item. The use of self-report is also another concern as students and faculty may have felt coerced into providing socially acceptable responses to the survey items. Inferences about the study results cannot be made to all high school students as eleventh grade students were not included in the data collection. While the reasons for exclusion of these students are not known, their inclusion is important in assuring a cross-sectional continuum of students at all grade levels. Another limitation was the survey which had not been tested for validity or reliability. As this study used only three items from the survey, testing for internal consistency was not possible. The use of a single county in a large Midwestern state limits the generalizability of the study to other counties in the same state and to other states.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are made for future research of teacher and student perceptions regarding school safety and respect that impacts student achievement within Michigan. These recommendations include:

Replicate the study using a more heterogeneous sample of students across the state to determine perceptions of safe schools and respect among students. This study should use a

questionnaire developed specifically to measure these aspects of school climate, with the questionnaire tested for reliability and validity. The results of this type of study could be used to develop state-wide policies for improving school climate in schools.

Develop a survey to measure students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and respect. The response format for the survey should use a 4-point Likert scale with a 1 indicating strongly disagree and a 4 indicating strongly agree. The survey should include survey items that have been derived from research literature and professional experiences. The survey needs to be tested rigorously for validity and reliability before using with the students and teachers. A valid, reliable survey to measure school climate in terms of safety and respect could be used by school districts across the nation.

Using a cross-section of students from sixth through twelfth grades, compare the perceptions of respect, bullying, and safety within schools to determine how perceptions change as students mature. The findings from this type of study could help focus professional development on managing specific types of respect and bullying occurring at different grade levels.

Employ a quantitative research design to study the extent to which students in middle and high school are experiencing cyberbullying from both the bully's and the victim's purview. This study needs to be cross-sectional to determine the progression of cyberbullying among students from 12 to 18 years of age.

Conduct focus groups that include parents, teachers, and students to explore reasons for a lack of respect and safety issues in the school. The use of focus groups encourages conversations among different factions within the school that might not otherwise happen. The focus groups need to be monitored by a trained interviewer to assure that all members are heard. The results of

the focus groups should be considered in establishing policies for building respect among all stakeholders and creating a safe environment that is conducive for teaching and learning.

Conclusions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and student-to-student respect as a measure of school climate. Establishing safety and respect in the building environment is a major step in creating a positive school climate. The study provided evidence that students were more likely to perceive a lack of respect among students than teachers. The study also identified a positive relationship between respect and safety. A difference was found for safety, but not for respect when compared on the Michigan Top-to-Bottom list. Students in the ninth grade differed significantly from twelfth grade students in regard to safety and respect.

Students need a positive school climate if they are going to be successful, both academically and socially. Students need to feel safe from bullying and know that they are respected by other students are more likely to want to go to school. Students who do not feel safe at school are less likely to be engaged in their classwork and not perform optimally.

The school principals and teachers need to work together to promote a safe and orderly school, promote high expectations for behavior and academic achievement. An important finding of this study was the statistically significant differences in perceptions of safety and respect between ninth and twelfth grade students. Programs need to be in place to help ninth grade students make the transition from middle school to high school that can decrease bullying and increase respect at this vulnerable age.

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