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Adolescent Fears And Anxieties: A Comparative Analysis Of Parents' And Teachers' Perceptions Of Adolescent Differences

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ADOLESCENT FEARS AND ANXIETIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENT DIFFERENCES

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by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the study were 1) to compare parents and teachers and students perceptions of students' fears and anxieties, and 2) to determine if there were differences in students' fears and anxieties based on grade level or gender.

This study was quantitative in nature. Four hundred eighty-six middle school students in a five through eight configuration, and their parents and teachers were included in the sample. Two surveys were given: The Middle Level Survey was created by the researcher, and the Comprehensive Assessment of School Climate is a National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) product created by Kelley, Glover, Keefe, Halderson, Sorenson, and Speth (1986).

Statistical analysis of the data included the one-way ANOVA, Tukey's HSD, and descriptive statistics. This study investigated the perceptions of parents and teachers about the anxiety and fears of adolescents in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 and how parents' and teachers' perceptions are related to the perceptions of adolescents. Grade level and gender were disaggregated. Three areas were addressed: School Environment/Safety, Support for Learning, and Quality/Social Relationships. Parents and teachers held a greater perception of Environment/Safety than did students. Parents and teachers also recognized a more positive climate with Support for Learning than did students, and were more positive than students with their perceptions regarding Quality/Social Relationships (i.e., higher score indicating a more positive perception.). Students in Grade 8 noted more

concerns in all three areas than students in grades 5, 6, or 7. No significant difference was noted between males and females, although females had a more positive perception than did males.

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INTRODUCTION

Fear, defined as a normal reaction to a real or imagined threat, may be part of each student's individual path to maturation (Graziano, DeGiovanni, & Garcia, 1979; King, Hamilton, & Ollendick, 1988; Morris & Kratochwill, 1985). A good deal of the research on the subject does look at what young children fear and also at how those fears develope overtime recognizing how individual students adjust as they reach adolescence.

As children early in their childhood recognize the familiar setting as normal and predictable move to less familiar surroundings, they naturally are frightened by the unfamiliar. When youngsters move into the school setting a new stage is set. Fear of criticism, fear of failure, and fear of the unknown becomes relevant (Campbell, 1986).

The preparedness concept (Seligman, 1971) directly relates to the distribution of fears. Given their prevalence in the environment, the fears of certain stimuli or situations are far too common to be explained as having occurred through conditioning, whereas other fears are far too rare (Rachman & Seligman, 1976). Interestingly, the fear of snakes is frequently reported by people who have had no contact with the animal (Agras, Sylvester, & Oliveau, 1969). In contrast to this popular fear of snakes is the seemingly rare fear, for example, of electric power points. Normative fear investigations with children and adolescents have yielded similar findings. For example, Ollendick, Matson,

and Hensel (1985), as cited in King, Ollier, Lacuone, Schuster, Bays, Gullone et al., 1989, have found fears relating to death and danger among the most commonly reported. Included are fears such as earthquakes, not being able to breathe, and falling from high places.

The expression of fear is regarded as a positive feature in that normal fears help children cope with the challenges they face. Fears are a normal way for children to adapt to their environment and deal with various stressors. It is crucial that parents, teachers, and administrators understand how fears develop and the relation between normal fears and the development of more severe fears called "clinical fears" or "phobias" (Kratochwill, Sanders, & Wiemer, 1987). Another term that is commonly used to describe children's fears, phobias, and related states is anxiety.

Fear occurring as part of general development has been differentiated from clinical fear or phobia on the basis of several criteria, including whether or not the expressed fear is age or stage specific and whether or not it persists over an extended period of time (Miller, Barrett, Hampe, & Noble, 1974). Thus research in the area also is considered to have significant clinical importance, particularly in relation to establishing norms of fearfulness against which excessive or "phobic" fears can be identified (Graziano et al., 1979; King et al., 1988).

The emotional, psychological, and physical changes that adolescents have to address coupled with the relationships that they maintain in the classroom and in their family situations, frequently brings intense anxiety to that particular age group. The "generation gap" may be part of the antagonism; however, aside from the physical and emotional turmoil that adolescents go through, parents and teachers have largely failed to

be aware of the differences and the difficulties that confront teenagers. This lack of understanding often leads to additional confusion on both sides.

Many of the satisfactions and the distresses of adolescence are connected with making friends and finding a place in the peer group. Adolescents have a natural desire to be popular, to be accepted, to be well thought of by many people, especially their peers. The urge to become independent is strong. As children become teens the urge to free oneself from strong family ties leads the adolescent to join groups of his/her own age, either of his/her own sex or mixed groups. Much of the teen's dependence on the family for standards and support normally shifts to the peer group. If the peer relations become too absorbing, the adolescent may fail to develop his unique personality and emotional pattern. Despite the frequent occurrence of fears and phobias, few studies have examined how often certain fears and anxieties occur in the middle-aged adolescent. The lack of studies is due mostly to the traditional view that fear and/or phobia in children is transient (Emmelkamp & Scholing, 1997).

Kendall (1994) defines adolescence as a period of transition characterized by accelerated processes of change in cognitive, social and psychological functioning, accompanied by marked physical restructuring. Research on adolescent development shows a variety of attitudes about how to address developmental problems.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the issue of coping and adaptation to stress had become a major area of psychological research and practice. Although numerous studies have been published on this topic, there is an ongoing debate regarding the personal and contextual factors that influence the ability to cope with stressful experiences. Middle-level schools address students in grades five through eight. This

configuration adds preteens to the young adolescent group earlier than in the usual elementary K-5 or K-6 setting. Not all middle schools create positive appropriate learning opportunities for young teenagers. Epstein (1990) found that positive climates are more likely found in schools where grades are grouped with 6th through 8th graders than in schools grouped 7th through 9th or 7th through 12th. McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins (1996) suggest a more nurturing level with programs, class structures and practice are more likely to provide a positive environment for younger students, particularly in middle level buildings that include 5th graders. Many variables come into play when the social and academic needs of the student are being considered. Each school community has its own unique climate, as do individual buildings within the district-wide system.

Furman and Luke (1992) referred to the early maturation studies that documented the young adolescent's increase in "size, concern about appearance, interest in opposite sex, greater social consciousness & desire of independence" (p. 4) at a younger age. Our schools have changed, as have the configurations. Today's young people are maturing earlier. With a focus on the middle level concept of grades 5 through 8, discussion is valuable with a variety of related factors in mind. Parents and administrators have tried to stay on top of grade level transition and how increased movement from class to class affects their child's academic progress. Middle school is a difficult adjustment period for both boys and girls, although studies done by Simmons and Blythe (1987) indicated that issues with self-esteem and academic effort affected more females than males.

Research presented by Crockett, Peterson, Graber, Shalenberg, and Ebata (1989) found that movement from class to class and from teacher to teacher did have a negative

effect on students both emotionally and academically. Alspaugh and Harting (1995) noted that although students struggled with departmentalized classroom configurations, those same students did show improvement when those schedules were readjusted to self-contained classrooms. Elias, Ubriaco, Reese, Gara, Rothbaum, and Havil (1992) reported that males, during this young to mid adolescent period, were more likely to have issues accepting authority from adult teachers/administrators and were frequently lagging academically, in part because of those behavior conflicts. Fenzel (1989), suggested that there were fewer stressors during that mid adolescent phase when students had opportunities to move from subject to subject actually finding those transitions more positive than in a one-teacher classroom. Fenzel found that these transitional interactions did, in fact, lessen the anxiety level and those young male adolescents appeared to make more appropriate decisions behaviorally.

Every school brings differences to the question because communities differ greatly with regard to programs and social-economic status.

When families provide positive reinforcers, support and positive experiences, students come to school and to class prepared to learn and are more likely to interact appropriately with adults and peers (Epstein, 1990; Jenkins & McEwin, 1992).

Given the recognized fears and anxieties of adolescents today, this study examines if teachers and parents have a realistic perception regarding the level of anxiety and phobia experienced by adolescents. The different resolution strategies that bridge the gap between student and teacher and student and parent relationships will be examined and analyzed.

The teacher-student and parent-student relationship is dependent on the perception of one to another. The clarity of individual perceptions between these groups assures positive growth rather than misunderstandings and damage to relationships.

In this study, the findings of a survey used with a sample of middle level children and adolescents in a small rural school are reported. The prevalence, intensity, and content of fear and/or anxieties are reported, and grade level and gender differences are analyzed.

Statement of the Problem

The self-reported fears and anxieties of children and adolescents are influenced by many variables, including age, gender and socioeconomic status (Graziano et al., 1979; King et al., 1988). King and his colleagues found an age-related decline in fear and found that female subjects were more fearful than male subjects (King et al., 1989). King suggested that anxieties had predictable relationships to emotionality. Whereas fear is an immediate response to a threatening situation, anxiety is viewed as a more pervasive emotional experience (Johnson & Melamed, 1979).

Authors tend to use the terms fear and anxiety interchangeably, especially when referring to age specific and developmental childhood fears (Laurent, Hadler, & Stark, 1994). Those who work with adolescents in a clinical setting note that fears over extended periods of time need psychological intervention. Anxiety, depending on the length and severity, may simply be a normal emotion and limited to specific situations (Argulewicz & Miller, 1984). Lee, Piersel, Friendlander, and Colamer (1988) relate opinions to suggest that every adolescent deals with peer relations and anxiety in various ways. When young adolescents face anxiety and frustration repeatedly and without

responsible and positive support, they frequently are unprepared to deal appropriately with their anxieties. The severity of the repeated situations and the degree of seriousness does impact some individuals more than others (Beidel & Turner, 1984).

This study investigates the perception of parents' and teachers' about the anxiety and fears of adolescents in the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades and how parents and teachers perceptions of students are related to the perceptions of the adolescents. Grade level and gender will be disaggregated.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were 1) to compare parents and teachers and students perceptions of students' fears and anxieties, and 2) to determine if there were differences in students' fears and anxieties based on grade level or gender.

Research Questions

Is there a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based on grade level or gender?

Definition of Terms

Middle School. For the purposes of this study, a middle school is defined as a middle level public school with students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Principal. For the purposes of this study, a principal is defined as the middle school administrative head.

Teacher. For the purposes of this study, a teacher is defined as a certified professional employee teaching in grade 5, grade 6, grade 7 and/or grade 8.

Adviser-Advisee Program. Regularly scheduled times with a duration of about 10-15 minutes established during the classroom day in which each student has an opportunity to interact with a small group (approximately 15 of his or her peers and a staff member) about school-oriented and personal concerns (Gill & Read, 1990).

Interdisciplinary Teaming. A group of 3 to 5 teachers teaching the core subjects (math, English, social studies, science, and/or reading) who share the same student group, are located in a similar place within the building, and have a common planning period (Vars, 1989).

Rural Corporation. For the purposes of this study, a rural corporation is described as a school corporation containing less that 200 students per square mile as identified by the Indiana Department of Education (1995).

Parent. For the purposes of this study, parent is described as father, mother, or third party custodian.

Assumptions

Assumptions of the study exist in the following manner:

1. The teachers will respond with honesty and accuracy to the survey.
2. The parents will respond with honesty and accuracy to the survey.
3. Students have the depth of understanding and willingness to respond in a disclosing and accurate manner.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study exist in the following manner:

1. The time frame established during which data will be collected is the 2004-2005 academic year.

2. Approximately 486 middle level students and their families will be included in the population. Twenty-seven teachers will be included in the population study.

Limitations

Generalizations from the study will be limited to the degree that:

1. The school's location in the population of this study is representative of schools with a grade configuration of 5 through 8 in Indiana.
2. The number included in the sample will be limited to the students, parents and staff members that respond to the survey instrument.
3. Parent response may have a biased sensitivity due to the nature of the study.

Summary and Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 has provided the study's introduction, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, delimitations, and limitations. Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature and is subdivided into an introduction and research on middle level students' fears and anxieties within a grade 5 through 8 configuration. Chapter 3 presents information about the population sample, instruments used and methods of analysis. Chapter 4 will present findings. Chapter 5 will present a summary of the findings, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Related literature and research provides reviews with regard to the issue of children, fears and anxieties. The question remains about why some childhood fears disappear with maturity and others develop into life altering anxieties.

Research suggests that transient but nevertheless significant anxiety problems occur in 10-20% of children. More serious problems (i.e., overanxious disorder, separation anxiety and simple phobias) occur in about 5% of children. While many studies note gender differences, no consistent evidence is noted to suggest that fears are more numerous for girls than boys (Ollendick et al., & Hensel, 1985).

Phobia persists over an extended period of time, is unadaptive, and is not age or stage-specific. The term "clinical fear" is used to describe those with duration of over 2 years, or an intensity that is debilitating to one's life routine. Generally, these fears are reality-based and perceptually threatening. Few investigations have focused on the fears of adolescence (Morris & Kratochwill, 1983).

Schools in every community struggle to address adolescent issues of bullying, harassment, and self-esteem. The middle-level configuration of the local corporation adds the young adolescent in the 5th grade to that equation. Students are removed from the safety of the elementary setting at an early age. Including students who may be just 11

years of age with the faster pace of the middle school social scene naturally brings social situations to the forefront sooner. Some students thrive on new freedoms, while others struggle to make the necessary adjustments and become anxious, even fearful, in their surroundings.

Anxiety frequently causes an inability to concentrate on positive learning (Rapee, 1995). Young adolescents with anxiety and peer frustrations and fears avoid taking part in daily collaborative activities. These individuals may be disruptive or inappropriate simply to find themselves removed from daily interactions with classmates. Eventually, the lack of positive social interaction may lead to isolation and victimization (Albano, Chorpita & Barlow, 1996). These same adolescents are often submissive in social situations. Bullying and intimidation is frequently aimed at young teens that allow this inappropriate interaction to occur (Davidson, Hughes, George, & Blazer, 1993; Walters, Cohn, & Inderbitzen, 1996). Research done in the 90's suggests that anxiety often begins during the middle school age span and is shared by both males and females at equal rates (Davidson et al.; Last, Perrin, Hersen & Kazdin, 1992; Vasey, 1995). Students coming from the elementary setting find their levels of anxiety on the rise due to the increased pressures of social interactions (King, 1995; Strauss & Last, 1993). This pressure escalates on occasion for certain individuals. These teens are at a greater risk for depression and substance abuse (Kessler, et. al., 1994). Depending on the severity of the situation and the length of time the student deals with negative social interactions, social phobia takes its toll and often leaves individuals emotionally scarred (Davidson et al., 1993).

Because of the debilitating nature of the long term effects of fear/anxiety during this adolescent period, anxiety and social phobia in young adolescents deserves additional research. Parents and teachers alike will describe students who are anxious as also disruptive. Teens that deal with social phobias and are prone to anxiety disorders tend to have low self-esteem and handle relationships with peers poorly (Bowen, Offord, & Boyle, 1990; Messer & Beidel, 1994). Adolescents are said to be disruptive because they are anxious, or dispositionally anxious.

Other factors to consider include incidence figures. Anxiety disorders are the most common psychological syndromes, and some estimates suggest that up to 15% of all persons will experience anxiety of such severity at one time in their lives to warrant a formal diagnosis and/or treatment. Approximately 7.5% to 10% of children demonstrate anxiety disorders (Bernstein & Garfinkel, 1986). Many children who are given a diagnosis of anxiety disorder also are likely to be given an additional diagnosis, such as those that comprise the disruptive behavior disorders - ADHD, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder (Last & Strauss, 1990)

An additional factor to consider is gender differences. Researchers report females show greater levels of anxiety than males, however differences may, in fact, be part of social expectations. Females may feel they have a general social permission to report anxious systems (Harris & Ferrari, 1983; Ollendick et al., 1985). Marks (1987) suggests that at ages 10 and 11, boys are more likely to show fewer fears than do girls. Girls show more anxiety at early and late adolescence. Adolescent girls and boys tend to be anxious about different things. Females may be more concerned about receiving approval from adults, whereas males appear to be more anxious about peer reactions (Dweck & Bush,

1976). Therefore, when social expectations are controlled there seem to be few gender differences in anxiety.

Research over the past several years has focused on the how anxiety and depression are related. Adolescents who have been diagnosed with either anxiety or depression are likely to show some comorbidity (Anderson, 1994). A diagnosis of either depression or anxiety is hard to reach in research or in clinical practice. There are differences. Comorbidity refers to the presence of at least two disorders in one individual. Anxiety is a normal developmental pattern and also tends to be combined with many other disorders. Last, Perrin, Hersen & Kazdin (1992) compared comorbidity patterns in adolescents who were referred to clinics for overanxious disorder, separation anxiety disorder, or depression. When more than one diagnosis was given, anxiety was identified in over half of the situations supporting the hypothesis that anxiety does have high rates of comorbidity (Huberty, 1997). Kovacs, Feinberg, Crouse-Novak, Paulauskas and Finkelstein (1984) studied a sample of children referred for emotional or behavioral problems and depression. The authors also attempted to determine the order of onset of these disorders and in a study done by the researchers determined that anxiety and behavior disorders most often came before depression. Often they were combined.

Stark, Humphrey, Laurent, Livingston and Christopher (1993) compared children who were screened for anxiety and depression. The depressed children tended to have more negative attitudes toward themselves, the world, and the future, were more impulsive and angry, were more likely to live in a dysfunctional family, and these depressed teens were more challenged socially than were adolescents with anxiety alone (Huberty, 1997).

Fears and phobias are closely correlated. There are several theories concerning the etiology of phobias. Rachman's (1977) account is purely environmental. He proposed three pathways to phobia: classical conditioning (i.e., trauma), modeling (i.e., vicarious learning), and information (i.e. exposure to negative information about the phobic object). Menzies and Clarke (1995) and Gray (1982) have criticized this theory and suggest that phobias are inborn and independent of experience. Genetic differences among individuals have also been shown to be important for fear conditioning (Annas & Fredrickson, 1995).

A number of studies have shown that phobic (Fyer, Mannuzza, Chapman, Martin, & Klein, 1995) and other anxiety disorders run in families (Biederman, Rosenbaum, Bolduc, Faraone, & Hirshfeld, 1991). Fyer and his colleagues have also shown that the correlation among relatives is specific to each class of phobia; that is, it does not merely reflect generalized susceptibility to anxiety disorders. Most research has been completed with adults, and because the importance of genetic and environmental influences may vary over age, more studies on children are needed (Annas & Fredrickson, 1995).

There is conflicting evidence concerning sex differences in fearfulness in children. A few studies have reported little or no difference in fearfulness between boys and girls (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1983; Nalven, 1970). Most studies have, however, found more fears and phobias among girls. This sex difference is accentuated in adults (Fredrikson, Annas, Fischer, & Wik, 1996). It seems that the difference in fearfulness between the sexes increases in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Rutter & Garmezy, 1983).

There is considerable evidence that children experience general patterns of normative fear throughout their development (Field & Davey, 2001). For example, during infancy children tend to fear loud sounds, objects and separation from a caretaker. Normal fears of ghosts and animals follow a normal course as children become young adolescents. Traumatic situations and or repeated periods of anxiety frequently lead to more pervasive fears and phobias (Gullone & King, 1997; Draper & James, 1985).

Lichtenstein and Svartengren (1997) found that genetic effects, shared environmental effects, as well as non-shared environmental effects are a realistic fact of individual differences in fears and phobias in young children, but that the magnitude differs between sexes. Additionally, they report that while shared environmental effects contributed to a general susceptibility for fearfulness, non-shared environmental effects were fear specific. Genetic effects contributed to both general susceptibility and specific fearfulness.

Research into normative fear typically employs the Fear Survey Schedule for Children-Revised (FSSC-R) – a survey that asks children to indicate on a three-point scale (none, some and a lot) how much they fear specific situations and stimuli. Despite subtle differences arising from methodology (Muris, Merckelback, & Collaris, 1997), this research suggests that prominent clusters of childhood fears that emerge bear an intuitive relation to adult phobias. Examples are animal phobia, height phobia, water phobia, necrophobia, and social phobias. Recent evidence also suggests that these normative fears reflect serious anxiety disorders in a substantial minority of children (Muris, Merckelback, Mayer, & Prins, 2000).

Pulling together data from the various researchers (Muris, Merckelback, Meesters, & Van Lier, 1997), it seems that normative fears develop in the following way: situations/environment (early childhood), animals and ghosts (4-8 years old), injury (pre-adolescence), and social situations/criticism (adolescence). Field and Davey (2001), among others, have noted that this developmental pattern corresponds to the reported age of onset of related adult phobias. Field and Davey point out that this provides a strong basis for assuming that the seeds of anxiety are sown in childhood.

Identification and clarification presented by Rapee (1995) suggests the following definitions for anxiety disorders in children.

Separation Anxiety Disorder: fear of separation from major attachment figures, refusal or avoidance of going to school, sleeping alone, being left alone; excessive worry about separation, car accidents, being kidnapped, getting lost; aches, headaches, nausea and vomiting on separation.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder: excessive worry about every day life matters, excessive reassurance seeking, stomach, head and muscle aches, irritability, poor concentration, restlessness, tiring easily, sleeping difficulties.

Social Phobia: fear of making mistakes, looking silly, doing something embarrassing, avoidance of situations involving evaluation, few friends.

Panic Disorder: recurrent/persistent panic attacks, fear of future attacks/worry about dying, losing control, going crazy, avoidance of situations where future attacks may occur.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: recurrent, persistent or intrusive thoughts, fear of contamination, repetitive behaviors aimed at reducing or preventing a dreaded event.

Specific Phobia: excessive fear of a particular object or event, fear of heights, dark, spiders, dogs, storms, thunder, water, injections, dentists or blood.

Anxiety has been recognized in medicine since the 19th century, but has only recently been officially recognized and classified as a mental disorder (Shaywitz & Liebowitz, 2003). The understanding of the neurobiology of anxiety has progressed rapidly in recent years from basic knowledge that γ-aminobutyric acid (GABA) and serotonin neurotransmitter systems were involved in the expression of anxiety to more fully understanding the complex interaction of multiple neurotransmitters, the fear neuro-network centered in the amygdale, and the genetic predisposition. The amygdale is critical to fear responses and projects to multiple brain systems involved in the physiological and behavioral responses to fear. Its involvement in anxiety is suggested by imaging studies, which have shown increased amygdale activation in anxious subjects compared to healthy controls in some anxiety disorders (DeBellis, Casey, & Dahl, 2000).

In the generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) patient, the degree of anxiety or worry is out of proportion to the likelihood or severity of impact of the feared event and cannot be attributable to any other more focal distress. Generalized anxiety disorder is common, with an estimated 12-month prevalence of 3.1% and a lifetime prevalence of 5.1%, with women diagnosed 60% more frequently than men (Kessler, et al., 1994). GAD is a chronic illness but, despite its high prevalence, little is understood about the course of the disease. GAD often occurs initially during adolescence and the severity of its symptoms can cycle over the lifetime. Depression is a common comorbidity of GAD and antidepressants are reported to be effective in its treatment (Shaywitz & Liebowitz, 2003). Social phobia or social anxiety disorder (SAD) is a fairly common disorder in

which subjects are unusually fearful of social interactions and are particularly concerned that their actions might cause embarrassment of humiliation (Zamorski & Ward, 2000).

The fear can be overwhelming and interfere with school, work, and other ordinary activities. SAD is a surprisingly common anxiety disorder; using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition-Revised (DSM-III-R) criteria, the 1-year prevalence was estimated to be about 8% and the lifetime prevalence about 13% (Kessler, et al., 1994). Social anxiety disorders frequently start with young children and adolescents. It does occur about twice as frequently in women as in men (Faravelli, Zucchi, & Viviani, 2000).

Typical symptoms of SAD include increased sweating, tremor, blushing, dry mouth, hypertension, and tachycardia (Zamorski & Ward, 2000). The causes of SAD are unknown, but there is strong evidence of a biological component, such as heritability, abnormalities in neurotransmitter receptor density, and the efficacy of medications used to treat SAD (Zamorski & Ward). Other anxiety disorders often comorbid with SAD include depression and alcohol abuse (Den Boer, 1997).

Beidel and Turner (1984) report that the main difference in normal versus clinical anxiety is dependent on the overall severity of symptoms and on the level of debilitation. Little research has been done about the relationship of fear and anxiety, particularly with regard to gender and economic factors. Researchers have investigated the relationships between normal fear and demographic variables, including sex and socioeconomic status (Gullone, 2000).

Generally, students in this study population are struggling to see success, both socially and academically. Counselors in every school district are dealing with increasing

issues of student data assessment, in addition to individual student counseling with regard to social and academic needs. The question of appropriate levels of adequate supervision and support continue to surface. This survey process will allow the reader a definition of strengths and limitations to consider, and give school communities background information to review as they look at their own systems.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODS

The self-reported fears and anxieties of children and adolescents are influenced by many variables, including age, gender and socioeconomic status (Graziano, et al., 1979; King et al., 1988). In addition to these demographic variables, it is believed that fear is influenced by psychological states, particularly anxiety. Whereas fear is an immediate response to a threatening situation, anxiety is viewed as a more pervasive emotional experience (Johnson & Melamed, 1979).

The researcher reviewed numerous surveys in an effort to locate one that would properly address issues of the student, teacher and parent perceptions of students' fears and anxieties. Two separate surveys were used to address the needs and strengths of adolescents in this particular study. The Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was comprised of 20 questions similar in content to the climate survey prepared for the Comprehensive Assessment of School Evaluation which is a National Study of School Evaluation. The Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was field tested with two separate groups of administrators, parents, and school psychologists. This Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was researcher developed and field tested prior to use. This survey asked parents, teachers, and students what most people think about their school. The questions, written in comfortable prose, were easy to understand. Some of the questions were designed to address district concerns based on the economic/social issues that

confront students and families in this local district. These two surveys complimented each other as reasonable and appropriate assessment tools.

This study investigated the perception of parents and teachers on the anxieties and fears of adolescents in the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades and how parents and teachers perceptions of students were related to the perceptions of the adolescents. Age (average grade level) and gender were disaggregated. Strategies for coping with these perceptive differences were reviewed.

The purposes of the study were 1) to compare parents and teachers and students perceptions of students' fears and anxieties, and 2) to determine if there were differences in students' fears and anxieties based on grade level or gender.

The design involved the following procedures:

1. Four hundred eighty-six students from grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 were included in the population. Two surveys were mailed to parents. One hundred sixty-eight parents returned the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment Survey and 71 returned the Middle Level Survey. Twenty-six teachers completed both surveys.
2. Teacher perceptions of middle level students' fears and/or anxieties were collected using a Likert scale survey.
3. Parents' perceptions of middle level students' fears and/or anxieties were collected using a Likert scale survey.
4. Students' perceptions of fears and/or anxieties were collected using a Likert scale survey.

Research Questions

Is there a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based on grade level and/or gender?

Data Source

For the purposes of this study, a middle school is defined as one encompassing grades 5 through 8. Data from Quality Education Data indicates that in 1996 there were 1,475 schools nationwide with this 5-8 grade configuration. There are only 26 middle level schools with this grade configuration in Indiana (Indiana Department of Education, 1995). The schools within this grade configuration represent urban, suburban, small town, and rural communities.

This particular middle school has 47% of students eligible for the free/reduced lunch program. The special education population is over 23%. Recent statistics from the Indiana Department of Education indicate that approximately 31% of the adult population within the district has less than a high school education and 26% of the students live in single parent homes. The population is highly transient with only 50% of the families in the district having the same residence in 1990 as they did in 1985. Each year approximately 20% of the students move in or out of the district. And, 12% of families are currently at or below the poverty level with a per capita income of $11,544.00. The school community has a 2% minority population. Student population for the district has declined from 1515 students in 1999-2000 to 1411 students in 2002-2003.

Data Collection Process

A total of 486 students in the four grade levels (5, 6, 7, and 8) were included in the study; the number of students invited in each individual group varied due to organization (e.g. tight schedule, lack of room to conduct the interview) and political issues (e.g. lack of interest or support from teachers) in some grades. Data was excluded for adolescents who were not within the age criteria (i.e., younger than 9 and older than 14). In addition, students were disallowed due to being sick, on holidays, or may have been disallowed because of conflicts in individual schedules. Participants for this study were recruited from four grade levels in a rural middle level school. The Board of School Trustees in the local school corporation gave permission to conduct the study. The study was presented to each class using the Advisor/Advisee program previously in place in that middle school. Each student who expressed interest in participating in the study was given background information about the study. A consent form was provided parents to sign to indicate agreement that their child could participate in the study. The first phase of the study took place in the spring semester 2005.

A licensed teacher administered the questionnaires to the students in small groups (approximately 15 students) in a classroom setting during their Advisor/Advisee class period. The classroom teacher read each item carefully as well as the response options for each item. Students were told not to worry over any particular item and that they should not be interested other students' responses. Data was collected by grade levels and was reviewed. The student surveys were ranked on the basis of teacher and parent perception of students' fears and anxieties. The teacher surveys were compared to the parent perception of students' fears and anxieties. The parent surveys were compared to the

teachers' perception of students' fears and anxieties. Gender differences were also disaggregated. These results were used to determine if there is a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties; if there was a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties; and if there was a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties.

This particular group of students was chosen because the researcher is an administrator in the district and sees first hand the problems young adolescents have struggling to be successful in an anxiety-filled assessment driven society. In a current position as superintendent, the researcher has studied and used 'best practices' identified in current research and literature. Experience in various educational administrative roles and knowledge of special needs children has provided the researcher with recognized clear expectations for teachers, school guidance counselors and building principals.

Access to parents, teachers and students was reasonable and timely. Permission to work with students and faculty was obtained from the building principal, as well as the local board of school trustees.

Instrumentation

Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey

The Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was comprised of 20 questions similar in content to the climate survey prepared for the Comprehensive Assessment of School Evaluation, which is a National Study of School Evaluation. The Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was field tested with two separate groups of administrators, parents, and school psychologists. This Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was researcher developed and field tested prior to use. Questions for each surveyed group were identical.

The survey was completed by 382 students. The survey was returned by 71 parents, and 43 parents of middle school children in this school had two children attending, 6 parents had three children attending, and, 6 parents had four children attending this particular middle school. The Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey was given to 27 teachers and 26 surveys were completed and returned.

Teachers, parents and students responded to the following statements:

Safety in the School Setting

1. Our school provides students and teachers with a safe and orderly environment.
2. Students are provided safe transportation to and from school.
3. Good school citizens possess the skills necessary to work through conflicts without resorting to violence
4. Students are safe while they are at school.

Support for Students in the School Setting

1. Our school provides sufficient opportunities for parent involvement.
2. School counselors give students the help they need to solve personal problems.
3. A cooperative support environment exists between teachers, parents, and students.
4. Our school cares about students as individuals.
5. When students have personal problems, they can feel comfortable talking confidentially to an adult.

6. Patience and understanding from caring adults help students make good choices.
7. Parents take an active role in their children's education.

Social Acceptance at School

1. Students trust each other and value individual differences among their peers.
2. Students feel good about what is happening at school and are confident, cheerful, and self-disciplined.
3. Lunch, recess and passing periods are times students can enjoy being with friends.
4. Giving oral reports or speeches is a good way to earn grades and share knowledge.
5. Students show respect fore each other.
6. School uniforms would be a good thing for our school to consider.
7. Students recognize the importance of good manners and good citizenship.
8. Students treat others the way they would like to be treated.
9. Respect, honesty and responsibility are positive qualities shared by students in our school.

Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments

The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate Survey is a National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) product that consists of 43 short, multiple-choice statements. This climate instrument asks individuals to indicate how they personally feel about the climate of their middle school. The instrument provides sub-scores on each of the following ten dimensions:

1. parent and community-school relationships,
2. student behavior values,
3. guidance,
4. instructional management,
5. student activities,
6. teacher-student relations,
7. security and maintenance,
8. administration,
9. student academic orientation, and
10. student-peer relationships. (Kelley, et al., 1986)

The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment includes four survey instruments: Climate Survey, Student Satisfaction Survey, Teacher Satisfaction Survey, and Parent Satisfaction Survey. During the national pilot the climate survey was administered to 1,500 teachers. The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment (CASE) Climate survey was administered to 14,600 students and 4,400 parents during the national pilot and normative studies (Kelley et al., 1986).

The following method has been used to assure instrument reliability. For each of the four instruments, internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were determined. These indices provide an estimate of the degree to which items on a given subscale are similar in meaning (Kelley et al., 1986). Evidence was also provided about the instrument's content and construct validity. Content validity is defined as the extent to which items on a scale are representative of the interest's domain(s). The climate and satisfaction instruments were developed after an extensive literature review. A data bank

of items was generated. The task force then acted as an expert panel in item development and selection (Kelley et al.).

For the purposes of exploratory factor analysis the climate items were listed at random in the pilot studies. Redundant and ambiguous items were revised or excluded. Both empirical data from the field studies and rational consideration guided subsequent draft formation of each instrument (Kelley et al., 1986).

Kelley, et al. (1986) stated that:

> construct validity is defined as an abstraction, not directly observable, that attempts to account for measured behaviors. Construct validity is concerned with the meaningfulness of a test, whether it really measures that underlying trait or characteristic that gives it meaning. (p. 6)

The process was described by Kelley, et al. as follows:

> During the development of the instruments, the task force placed great emphasis on scale and item conceptualization in order to support strong construct validity. Task force members produced position papers and reviews of instrumentation keyed to the pertinent variables of the Interactive Model of School Environment. Extensive use of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis in field testing the instruments ensured that only concepts and items with strong factor loadings were retained. Factor analysis is a computerized statistical technique used to identify the basic relationships among sets of test scores. Factor analysis confirms the existence of "a priori" clusters of items, allowing the researcher to judge whether the measured dimensions of the test are those predicted theory. Factor analysis of the climate and satisfaction instruments identified both the intercorrelated items

> and the underlying factors (subscales) that seemed to account for the correlations. The analyses confirmed the conceptualization of the scales and guided the revision of the instruments. Task force review and factor analysis analyses both support a strong construct validity for the climate and satisfaction instruments. (p.8)

While the Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey addressed more specific concerns of the local school community, the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments Survey served as the primary climate survey. In this particular school community, parents, students, and faculty, at least in part, are disturbed by a combination of low test scores, apathy, and a failure on the part of many students to do their "personal best."

The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments Survey was completed and returned by 168 parents; 26 of the 27 possible teachers completed this survey; and 279 student surveys were included in the statistical analysis. Incomplete surveys were disallowed, as were those with clear omissions and/or pattern answers.

Research Questions

The first research question examined the difference in the perceived fears and/or anxieties between students and teachers. The second research question sought to establish the difference between the perceived fears and/or anxieties between students and parents. The third research question posed an additional response from the difference in the perceived fears between teachers, parents and students. The fourth research question addressed the difference in perceived fears and/or anxieties of students based on grade level. The fifth research question addressed the difference in perceived fears and/or anxieties of students based on gender.

Statistical Analysis

The first research question, "there is no significant relationship between the teachers' perceptions of students' fears and/or anxieties" was tested using a one-way analysis of variance with higher scores indicating a more positive perspective.

The second research question "there is no significant relationship between the parents' perceptions of students' fears and/or anxieties" was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with higher scores indicating a more positive perspective.

The third research question, "there is no significant relationship between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties" was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with higher scores indicating a more positive perspective.

The fourth research question, "there is no significant difference in perceptions of students' fears and/or anxieties based on gender" was tested using one-way analysis of variance(ANOVA) with higher scores indicating a more positive perspective.

A fifth research question "there is no significant difference in perceptions of students' fears and/or anxieties based on grade level" was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a Tukey HSD, and an alpha value of .05.

Reviewing prior research, three themes emerged to suggest issues of school safety, school support, and social relationships have the greatest impact on academic success at the middle school level. The dependent variable in this study was the overall comfort level of students. Issues of respect, safety, and personal confidence were incorporated into the survey questions. The question of gender or grade level affected a difference between the overall comfort score noted. A triangulation of data from parents,

teachers and students does provide insight into the young adolescents as they mature socially and cognitively.

Summary

In this chapter, the following design components were presented and described: the data source, including the population, and the instrumentation used. One main purpose of this study was to compare parents and teachers and students perceptions of students' fears and anxieties. The second main purpose was to determine if there were differences in students' fears and anxieties based on grade level or gender. The researcher attempted to determine the interrelationship of these perceptions and the role they play in making the decision to provide additional support to only the neediest students or to the overall population within that middle school.

Chapter 4

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were 1) to compare parents and teachers and students perceptions of students' fears and anxieties, and 2) to determine if there were differences in students' fears and anxieties based on grade level or gender.

Research Questions

Is there a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based by grade level and/or gender?

Design of the Study

Two surveys, The Middle Level Survey and The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate Survey, were given to 486 students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. Parents and teachers of those 486 students were also surveyed. The Middle Level Survey was completed by 382 students, and 279 students also completed The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate Survey. Students were encouraged to complete both surveys; however, some students chose to complete the shorter 20 question survey. The separations of genders were 165 female students and

204 males. The Middle Level Survey was completed and returned by 71 parents and 168 parents returned The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate Survey. Of those parents returning survey information, 43 parents had two children attending this middle school, 4 parents had three children attending the school, and one family had four children in this same middle school. Twenty-six of the 27 teachers completed and returned both surveys.

The design of the study involved the following basic procedures. The study was quantitative in nature. Accepting the mean to indicate that the higher score is more positive, parent perceptions of School Safety, School Support, and Social Relationships were higher than were student perceptions. Teacher perceptions were also higher (more positive) than were student perceptions in all three subscales. This would suggest that adults, in fact, recognize fewer concerns with regard to adolescent emotional and/or social distractions, and that they see adequate adult support and guidance available to their children (see Table 4.1).

Educators and parents alike must review the affective needs of middle school adolescents if they intend to provide the most positive learning environment. When adolescents have a level of comfort and are self assured that they can be competent and academically successful at their own level, their own "personal best", they can regulate their behavior, set goals for themselves, and process what they are taught more efficiently. Possible reasons why parents and teachers perceive a more comfortable, relaxed school setting may be direct knowledge and understanding of programs and support systems in place.

Table 4.1

Means – Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey

	School Safety	School Support	Social Relationships
Teacher Perceptions	3.28	3.59	2.79
Parent Perceptions	3.51	3.49	2.93
Student Perceptions	3.24	3.40	2.58

The information from the Middle Level Survey was analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance for the first four research questions. A Tukey HSD was used to compare differences between grade levels. Given the nature of the study, the questions pertaining to quality of instruction were not included. The relevant questions were divided into three subscales: School Safety, School Support, and Social Relationships.

The first research question, with regard to difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties, indicated there was a significant difference between teacher perceptions of school safety and student perceptions of that same safe and secure learning environment. Teachers did have a higher positive perception of safety than did students. With issues of school support, no significant difference was noted between teacher perceptions and student fears and anxieties. With issues of social relationships, no significant difference was noted between teacher perceptions and student fears and anxieties (see Table 4.2). With the question of social relationships, the researcher would suggest teachers are more aware of the social difficulties of adolescent relationships in school than are parents because they are more likely to observe these emotional/social situations in lunch areas, hallways, and in classrooms.

The second research question, with regard to the difference between parent perception and student fears and anxieties, indicated there was a significant difference with the issue of school safety and with social relationships. With issues of support of student learning, there was no significant difference between parent perception and student perception. Parents perceived a more positive learning environment than students perceived (see Table 4.2). Issues of belonging to "the popular group," the trauma of coping with boy-girl relationships, the trials of occasional inappropriate behavior by friends and hurtful, harassing comments, even bullying, may not be recognized by adults.

The third research question, with regard to difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties, indicated there was no significant difference in issues of school safety. With issues of school support of student learning, there was no significant difference between teacher and parent perceptions. With issues of social relationships, there was no significant difference between teacher and parent perceptions (see Table 4.2).

The fourth research question, with regard to difference in fears and anxieties of students based on age indicated by grade and/or gender, indicated there was no significant difference noted between males and females with regard to issues of school safety, school support, or issues of social relationships. There were no significant differences between any of the surveyed areas of safety, support, and social climate for learning (see Table 4.3).

Previous research from numerous studies suggest that in earlier studies girls report more fears, anxieties, and distress than boys due to biological and temperamental

Table 4.2

F Table Analysis of Variance for Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey

	Df	School Safety	Sig	School Support	Sig	Social Relationships	Sig
Teacher Student	(1,406)	11.94***	.001	1.740	.188	2.36	.125
Parent Student	(1,451)	6.09*	.014	.981	.323	15.25***	.000
Teacher Parent	(1,95)	3.73	.056	.458	.500	.855	.357

* significance indicated by .05

** significance indicated by .01

***significance indicated by .001

factors, coping styles, and parenting efforts to treat boys and girls differently from infancy. Parenting has changed over the years. Adolescent females are provided equal opportunities both in school, extra-curricular activities, and in career placement. If seeds of anxiety are sown in childhood, as Field and Davey (2001) point out, female students today appear to be more self-assured and confident of their many opportunities. Many of the earlier researchers focused on how gender and economic issues impact fear and/or anxiety (Gullone, 2000), however, not for fears/anxiety related to school safety, support, and social relationships. Adolescent anxieties over these types of interpersonal interactions escalate without parental and/or adult guidance.

Accepting the higher mean to reflect a more positive perception, while there were no significant differences noted, females did perceive a slightly more positive perception in all three areas than did males (see Table 4.3). Every adult remembers some positive,

Table 4.3

Means for Middle Level Survey Fears/Anxiety Survey - Gender

Gender	School Safety	School Support	Social Relationships
Male	3.20	3.34	2.53
Female	3.30	3.47	2.63

some traumatic experience from those adolescent years. Adolescent girls tend to have lower self esteem and a more negative view of their physical characteristics and intellectual abilities than boys. Intelligence, athletic ability, and physical attractiveness are all biological components by which teens rate themselves and their peers. Moving into a new generation, girls are increasingly more confident and are both self-involved psychologically and socially with athletics and with career options. Opportunities for success are more available to females today than ever before.

The difference between males and females was not significant in the subscale areas of School Safety, School Support, or Social Relationships (see Table 4.4).

In this particular population, as students matured, their anxieties and fears increased. A significant difference was noted for Grade and School Safety. Students in Grade 5 and 6 had a more positive perception of their School Safety in the middle school setting than students in Grade 8; however, there were no differences between the other grades. There was a significant difference for Grade and School Support. Students in Grade 5 had more positive perceptions than students in Grade 7 or 8. There were no differences between the other groups. A significant difference was also observed for Grade and Social Relationships. Grades 5, 6, and 7 had stronger, more positive

Table 4.4

Analysis of Variance for Middle Level Fears/Anxiety Survey - Gender

Gender	df	School Safety	Sig	School Support	Sig	Social Relationships	Sig
Male-Female	(1,367)	1.21	.270	2.46	.117	1.82	.178

* significance indicated by .05

** significance indicated by .01

***significance indicated by .001

perceptions than Grade 8 in this area, but there were no other differences. A Tukey HSD was completed to report the mean differences between Grades and Grade Groups (see Table 4.6). This breakdown allowed a review of where the differences were. Significant differences were found in all three subscales of Safety, Support, and Social.

A review of the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate Survey developed for the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) showed similar data. Teachers, and parents of 486 students, and the students themselves, were asked to rate 10 climate areas: teacher-student relationships, security and maintenance, administration, student academic orientation, student behavioral values, guidance support, student-peer relationships, parent and community school relations, instruction, and student activities on a 1.0 to 5.0 Likert scale. Given the nature of this study, the focus once again was on the three identified areas of Safety/School Environment, Support for Student Learning, and Social/Quality Relationships (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.5

Analysis of Variance for Middle Level Fears/Anxiety Survey - Grade

	df	School Safety	Sig	School Support	Sig	Social Relationships	Sig
Grade 5-8	(3,381)	5.96***	.001	14.63***	.000	11.11***	.000

* significance indicated by .05

** significance indicated by .01

***significance indicated by .001

In this second survey, The Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate NSSE, parents and teachers held a greater perception of Safety/School Environment than did students with the higher score indicating a more positive perception. Teachers and parents also recognized a more positive climate for Support for Learning than did students. Teachers and parents once more were more positive than students with their perceptions regarding Social/Quality Relationships (see Table 4.7).

The first research question, with regard to difference between parent perception and student reported fears and anxieties, there was a significant difference with issues of Safety in School Environment. With issues of Support of Learning, there were significant differences noted as well. No significant difference was noted for Social Quality/Relationships (see Table 4.8).

The second research question, with regard to difference between teacher perception and student reported fears and anxieties, there was a significant difference noted with Support for Learning, but no significant differences for areas of

Table 4.6

Tukey HSD – Middle Level Survey

			School Safety		School Support		Social Relationship	
Grade	Group	df	Mean Difference	Sig	Mean Difference	Sig	Mean Difference	Sig
	6		-0.06	.951	.018	.333	-0.12	.595
Gr 5	7	(3,378)	0.016	.533	0.39**	.001	0.05	.936
	8		0.39**	.004	0.63***	.000	0.40***	.000
	5		0.06	.951	-0.18	.333	-0.12	.595
Gr 6	7	(3,378)	0.23	.260	0.22	.181	0.18	.275
	8		0.46***	.001	0.46***	.000	0.53***	.000
	5		-0.16	.533	-0.39***	.001	-0.06	.936
Gr 7	6	(3,378)	-0.23	.260	-0.22	.181	-0.18	.275
	8		0.23	.207	0.24	.090	0.35**	.002
	5		-0.39**	.004	-0.63***	.000	-0.40***	.000
Gr 8	6	(3,378)	-0.46***	.001	-0.46***	.000	-0.53***	.000
	7		-0.23	.207	-0.24	.090	-0.35**	.002

* significance indicated by .05

** significance indicated by .01

***significance indicated by .001

Table 4.7

Means for Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate

	Safety/Environment	Support for Learning	Quality/Relationships Social
Teacher	3.94	4.60	4.32
Parent	4.23	4.40	4.21
Student	3.78	4.22	4.18

Safety/Environment or Social/Quality Relationships (see Table 4.8).

The third research question, with regard to difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties, there were no significant differences noted in any of the three areas of Safety/Environment, Support for Student Learning, or Social/Quality Relationships (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Analysis of Variance for Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment Survey

	df	Safety/ Environ.	Sig	Support/Learning	Sig	Social/Rel.	
Teacher Student	(1,303)	1.10	.294	7.43**	.007	.944	.332
Parent Student	(1,445)	37.76***	.000	6.95**	.009	.195	.659
Teacher Parent	(1,192)	3.60	.059	1.96	.165	.618	.433

* significance indicated by .05

** significance indicated by .01

***significance indicated by .001

The *F* Table 4.8 data would reinforce the Middle Level Survey data that parents and teachers recognize Support for Learning in place while students either do not know

about these supports, or are reluctant to ask for help from counselors or teachers and/or administrators.

Summary

Data suggest that students do, in fact, experience anxieties and fears that parents and teachers do not recognize. The findings for each of the research questions were given in this chapter. Two separate surveys were used to substantiate a more complete understanding of students' fears and anxieties. Results were similar in each survey.

Parents participating in this study did have a more positive perception with regard to student safety than did their children. With issues of social relationships, a significant difference was also noted. Parents perceived a more positive learning environment than students perceived. Teachers perceived a more positive learning environment than did students. With regard to difference in fears and anxieties of students based on gender, there was no significant difference noted between males and females with regard to issues of Safety/School Environment Support for Learning, or Social/Quality Relationships, although females were generally more positive about their issues and/or concerns than were males. Based on grade level, a difference did exist between students in Grade 5 and Grade 8 and Grade 6 and Grade 8 for Safety/ School Environment. Students in Grade 5 and Grade 6 were more positive than students in Grade 8.

There was a difference between students in Grade 5 and Grade 7, Grade 5 and Grade 8, and Grade 6 and Grade 8 for Support for Learning. Grade 5 was more positive than Grades 7 and 8. Grade 6 was more positive than Grade 8. With regard to Social/Quality Relationships, there was a difference between Grade 5 and Grade 8, Grade

6 and Grade 8, and Grade 7 and Grade 8. Grades 5, 6, and 7 were more positive in their perceptions than students in Grade 8.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were 1) to compare parents and teachers and students perceptions of students' fears and anxieties, and 2) to determine if there were differences in students' fears and anxieties based on grade level or gender.

Research Questions

Is there a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties? Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based on grade level and/or gender?

Findings

Hanna (1997) reported that excellent middle grade programs support early adolescent social, personal, and academic development and focus on middle level practices rather than grade span. Diverging interests and friendships grow or fade during the middle school years, often due to class schedules and family demands or connections. The term "self regulatory behavior" was used by White (1998) to discuss the level of trust and commitment developed between schools and students. Parents and school staff need to be cognizant of the affective needs, the fears and/or anxieties of adolescents if we

expect them to progress academically and socially. A level of trust is crucial at this juncture. Students need to trust their teachers before they share their innermost thoughts on paper. Students need to trust their parents to support them should a crisis arise; they should be able to talk openly about concerns or fears, no matter how trivial. Students need to feel a level of trust among their peers. Respect and confidence build more respect and confidence. Indiscriminate friendships, inappropriate relationships, or isolation are particularly disastrous for adolescents. Fears and/or anxieties either diminish as teens enter adulthood, or they determine lifestyles that have an impact on their families and their children. Indeed, the emotional, psychological, and physical changes that adolescents have to address coupled by the relationships that they maintain in the classroom and in their family situations, frequently bring intense anxiety to young adolescents. Seemingly, aside from the physical and emotional turmoil that adolescents go through, parents and teachers have largely failed to be aware of the differences and the difficulties that confront teenagers. This lack of understanding often leads to additional confusion on both sides. A closer look at the anxieties and/or fears that distract young adolescent students from doing their personal best does indicate differences in perceptions in three primary areas: school safety, school support for learning, and social relationships. Despite our best efforts to provide information and programs to promote a positive learning environment, students do not perceive their school climate in the same more positive manner as their parents or their teachers. Coping with stress and adjusting to new more demanding expectations brings additional psychological and social issues to the forefront. Family backgrounds, individual attitudes, and at varied levels of maturity certainly add to the equation.

Furman and Luke (1992) discussed the fact that students do grow in size and become increasingly social as they move toward maturation and independence. Public schools today are very different than they were even ten years ago. In addition to researchers, teachers, administrators and local school boards have looked at the effects of the transitions to new schools and increased movement and/or departmentalization for the young adolescents. The transition to independence is difficult. This study failed to show a significant difference between genders with regard to anxieties and/or fears in the three areas of concern with regard to safety, support, and social relationships. Simmons and Blythe (1987) reported a lag in effort and self-esteem for young females. Crockett, et al. (1989) also discussed the effects of transitions on academic effort and esteem. In this current study, female students were more positive in their perceptions than were their male counterparts.

Students in Grade 5 in this rural public school were more positive with regard to all three areas of safety, support, and social relationships than were students in higher grades with students in Grade 8 indicating more concern, more anxiety and/or fearfulness about their school climate than the students in Grades 5, 6, and 7. Difficulties in transition, self-concept, and perceived competence appear to be more prevalent at the 8^{th} grade mid-adolescent level, perhaps in part due to increased independence, both earned and given, to ready students for the transition to high school.

Recognizing that levels of family support, self-esteem, and perceptions of competence greatly impact individual perceptions of safety, support and social relationships, it is reasonable to suggest that in public schools where half the population of students come from at-risk homes, we would find a number of students with less than

appropriate parental support for a variety of reasons. The school climate and transition stress/anxiety level depends then, at least in part, on community content and characteristics of students and their families. The ability to adjust to the stresses of transition may be dependent on the number/amount of resources the student brings to school, whatever the grade level. A positive, consistent, caring relationship with teachers, counselors, and same age peers is crucial. The climate of the school and the quality of the learning environment each and every day is one basic tenet of a successful middle school experience. Some students thrive on new freedoms, while some struggle to make the necessary adjustments and become anxious, even fearful, in their less comfortable surroundings.

This study was designed to investigate the perceptions of parents and teachers about the anxiety and fears of adolescents at the middle school level, grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, and how parents and teachers perceptions are related to the perceptions of the adolescents. Data was disaggregated by gender and by grade level. The focus of this study was to ascertain if students did perceive their school climate a comfortable learning environment. Subscales of School Safety/Environment, Support for Learning, and Social/Quality Relationships were the three areas of concentration most appropriate to the study of adolescent fears and anxieties.

In this study parents' perceptions of School Safety, School Support, and Social Relationships were higher than the perceptions of students. On reflection, recognizing that parents maneuvered the school process themselves, and may, in fact, remember their own adolescent experience rather than the actual situation their own children address, this question of comfort while at school may not raise critical concerns for adults. The current

generation, however, has grown up with different challenges and different demands. A teenager in today's more technological generation lives a faster paced life than generations past. Differences require that we, as adults, listen to their adolescent concerns, fears, and/or anxieties, be they real or perceived.

With regard to Safety - School Climate/Environment for Learning:

1. Is there a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties?
2. Is there a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties?
3. Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties?
4. Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based on grade level and/or gender?

Data suggest that with issues of Safety - School Climate/Environment, both parents and teachers perceived adequate controls were in place to assure students were able to transition from home to school, from class to class, from passing periods to lunch, etc., and back home in a safe and secure environment. Students, however, were less comfortable in their school setting. Fears and anxieties certainly do affect how adolescents approach their academic responsibilities. If students are uncomfortable in their daily social interactions, either with teachers, administrators, or peers, they are less likely to concentrate on the academic task or the cooperative learning effort required to master the academic standards being taught. Students must learn appropriate social skills if those skills are lacking. Teachers are obliged to recognize struggling adolescents and

immediately intervene to offer one-on-one support, and/or referral to appropriate guidance personnel. Parents must make time to listen to their children, to hear their concerns, and perhaps help them formulate appropriate coping strategies to think and work through difficult social situations. Implementing a plan to review the structured programs and classroom management strategies should happen on an ongoing basis. When good teachers are able to convey to their students a sense of caring and a willingness to listen, significant progress can be made. Respect and trust are essential; an understanding for each individual student's unique experience should be part of the "working together to help you get your education" equation.

With regard to Support for Student Learning:

1. Is there a difference between parent perceptions and student fears and anxieties?
2. Is there a difference between teacher perception and student fears and anxieties?
3. Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties?
4. Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based on grade level and/or gender?

Here, data suggest that with issues of Support for Student Learning, parents and teachers alike recognize programs and adequate adult supervision and guidance personnel available to students in this rural public school corporation. Teachers were very positive in their responses. Parents, too, were pleased with the availability of social supports. Students, on the other hand, were less comfortable in this area.

Behavioral symptoms of anxiety may include restlessness, being fidgety, erratic or irrational behavior, avoidance of anxiety-producing situations, frequent visits to the school nurse, frequently asking seemingly unnecessary questions, being too unassertive, holding back in sports due to lack of confidence in own ability, resisting staying overnight with friends, reluctance to participate or ask questions, preoccupied with perfection, crying, or nail biting. Physiological symptoms may include stomach aches, nausea, headaches, muscle tension and discomfort, rapid heart rate or palpitations, excessive perspiration, hot or cold flashes, shaking or tremors in the hands, or feelings of suffocation (Kendall, 1994).

As noted earlier, there is conflicting evidence concerning sex differences in fearfulness in children. Some studies have reported little or no difference in fearfulness between boys and girls (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1983; Nalven, 1970). Most studies have, however, found more fears and phobias among girls. It seems that the difference in fearfulness between the sexes increases in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Rutter & Garmezy, 1983).

Marks (1987) suggested that at ages 10 and 11, boys are more likely to show fewer fears than do girls, resulting in girls showing more anxiety at early and late adolescence. Girls and boys tend to be anxious about different things. Females appear anxious to receive positive comments and support from parents and adults while males frequently seem more concerned about the impression they make on their friends (Dweck & Bush, 1976). Therefore, there appear to be few if any differences, when social expectations are controlled for gender differences in anxiety. Interestingly, girls included in this study were less anxious about their school climate and more positive about issues

of safety, school support for learning and social relationships than were boys although there was no significant difference noted.

Students in Grade 5 were more comfortable at school, more positive in their perceptions, than students in Grades 7 and 8. While many studies indicate a level of maturity achieved by older students allows a decline of fears and/or anxiety, it is important to differentiate fear of violence, animals, or death, from fears and/or anxiety resulting from difficult or inappropriate social situations. Gullone and King (1997) in a study devoted to stress-medical fears that primarily assessed social evaluative fears, interestingly, noted that these events often increased. Data obtained from the Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey found a significant degree of continued anxiety that increased with time although with maturity this anxiety leveled to a more normal rate. Bullying and sexual harassment may occur at every grade level, however, it is often more subtle and more difficult for adults to discern at the middle school level. Students in the seventh and eighth grade levels are often unwilling to "tell on another student" for fear of being less popular, disliked, or ostracized.

With regard to Social – Quality/Relationships:

1. Is there a difference between teacher perceptions and student fears and anxieties?
2. Is there a difference between parent perception and student fears and anxieties?
3. Is there a difference between teacher and parent perceptions of student fears and anxieties?

4. Is there a difference in fears and anxieties of students based on grade level and/or gender?

With regard to Social - Quality Relationships, once again, parents, as a group, had the most positive perception with teachers indicating a more positive perception than students. This information suggests that while adolescent students, during the pre to mid-adolescent period, may try to appear self-assured, they may, when given the opportunity to express their thoughts privately, actually deal with very specific fears and/or anxieties over social situations in the classrooms, hallway during passing periods, and while transitioning to and from school.

Between Teachers' and Students' the significant difference was School Safety. The difference between Parents' and Students' was significant in both School Safety and Social Relationships. Teachers' and Parents' reported similar perceptions for all three subscales - Safety, Support, and Social. Teachers' and Parents' in this particular study did not recognize the same fears and anxieties that Students' perceived.

Younger students receive more nurturing, more individual attention, than do older students who may deal more independently with their social concerns. Mid-adolescence brings additional social issues – dating, appropriate male-female interactions, family stress, and increasing academic demands. While many students live in the same school district and progress through grades with the same classmates from elementary school through graduation, students who are part of an at-risk population are frequently in transition either from one parent to another family member or from one place to another due to financial challenges.

Forty-seven percent of the population surveyed was included in the Free and Reduced Lunch and Textbook demographic. Understanding how struggling students see their place in the world, how they perceive their level of safety, support, and social acceptance, is paramount to their academic, emotional and psychological success and effort at school.

A total of 486 Indiana public school students were asked to complete a two-part survey that provided data to the above questions. The same survey questions were presented to parents of the 486 students. A total of 186 parents responded to the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment School Climate compiled by the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) survey, and 71 parents responded to the Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey included in the same mailing. A total of 43 parents had 2 students in the middle school setting; 3 families had 3 children in this middle school, and 1 responding parent had 4 children in the middle school completing the survey. Of the 27 teachers in this rural public school, 26 completed both the Middle Level Survey Fear/Anxiety Survey and the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment Survey.

The data gathered via the Middle Level Fear/Anxiety Survey and the Comprehensive Assessment for School Environment Climate survey instrument were analyzed separately. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized for the statistical analysis of the data. The .05 level of significance was established as the level of significance for this study.

In this study, subscales of safety, support, and social relationships were analyzed to determine if students maintained a level of comfort in those areas as young adolescents

so to allow them to concentrate on their individual personal goals academically and socially.

The overall size of the sample population was not large, however, data obtained provided valuable information for this rural public school corporation. A replication of this study using a larger student population or populations drawing from different economic communities would provide insight. Overall anxiety self reports and grade level comparisons show an increase in anxiety as students approach later adolescence.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Differences exist in how parents and teachers recognize students' levels of comfort in the middle school setting. Given that students perceived their school environment to be a less positive climate, parents and teachers will need to determine how to address the fears and/or anxieties of their students to make sure they are more self-assured and intellectually comfortable while at school.
2. Parents and teachers both had similar perceptions about how their students viewed the middle school experience. Perhaps parents and teachers are more aware of supports and programs available than their students. If this is the case, adults as a group, may need to listen to the concerns of adolescents to calm their fears. Teachers of Advisor/Advisee programs already in place need to include students in discussions about relevant topics for discussion and provide a means of evaluation for content effectiveness.

3. Adolescent males and females have similar reactions to questions posed with regard to their personal levels of stress. Their emotional needs and social concerns were analogous. Students transitioning from classroom to classroom deal with demands from different teachers and with demands from larger numbers of peers. Expectations for all students increase. Local, diagnostic, and standardized achievement tests are routinely given students in the 5 through 8 grade levels. Boys and girls alike feel additional pressure and anxiety over mastery of increasingly difficult material and the possibility of remediation.
4. Anxieties and fears are more pronounced as students get older. As students adapt to the demands of their new environment, most acquire the skills necessary to meet expectations. Older students are more anxious and experience higher levels of emotional stress than do younger students. While differences exist at every age level, generally, students require assistance and encouragement from parents, peers, teachers and supportive adults.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations are suggested for future research based on questions raised in this study:

1. A study should be conducted at each grade level to ascertain whether students recognize support systems available to them.
2. Guidance counselors should identify students who would benefit from additional help from supportive adults spending quality time with individual students and provide additional material to be used during individual

conferences. Carefully screened community volunteers, parents, and cadet teachers are reasonable mentors.

3. A further study should include a review of programs in place to explore possible supports during the school day. Through creative strategies, middle-level schools can reduce academic and social stress and make learning more meaningful by using differentiated instruction in every classroom. Appropriate classroom structure and organized lesson plans that include reasonable time for students to interact informally under direct supervision would allow students to work cooperatively in small group settings within positive parameters.
4. Teachers and supportive adults need to a) model appropriate behaviors by implementing teaching strategies which encourage students toward self discipline; b) monitor progress toward students' personal goals; c) teach students to analyze statistical data about progress by recording and graphing their academic and personal goals; d) confer with students, individually, using an ongoing preset schedule to provide time for questions and time for student concerns addressing both affective and cognitive processes.
5. A qualitative study with teachers, parents and students would provide valuable information. Student comments would shed light on this most important arena. As adults, we often assume that we can work through any situation given time and attention. Students see their school climate through a different lens. Their thoughts and concerns would be valuable. Individual conversations with

parents would also allow teachers and administrators to see more clearly how they are perceived.

6. Parallel studies done with students in urban, suburban and additional rural middle school would provide insight and depth to this research.
7. Future research to increase the grade levels studied to include older adolescent students in grades 9 and 10 with consideration given to class size would provide additional baseline data.
8. Appropriate classroom management must be maintained to assure that all students are able to concentrate, to ask good questions freely and without fear of negative comments. A positive, caring environment is necessary for real learning to occur.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the present research, related conclusions, and presented recommendations regarding this study. This study searched for answers to specific questions regarding anxieties and fears of students at the young adolescent age.

The middle school experience is an important time in the life of young adolescents. For many young teenagers, the level of stress substantially increases as they transition into middle school. Hormonal changes, social pressures, and heavier workloads require that students deal with social and academic needs in a whole new way. Students frequently need assistance in learning to prioritize social commitment, school responsibilities, and family stresses. When students experience the classroom as a supportive, caring place where they are respected, valued and belong, they are generally more engaged in the learning process. This study focused on the level of comfort pre-

adolescents and adolescents have while they progress emotionally, academically, and socially through that middle school period of their lives. The question of how to reach out to adolescents to gain their trust and willingness to learn is not a new question. The demands of our local, state and national mandates, however, require that every child make adequate yearly progress. They must demonstrate mastery of standards, problem solve, connect with their peers and responsible adults, and be active in the school community of learners. For the student who comes to school anxious and fearful these normal connections may be less likely.

As students move from a more structured, nurturing classroom environment to more freedom and new social choices, the school setting takes on a more stressful climate. Some students may feel less competent to handle the academic and the social challenges they face. In the 7^{th} and 8^{th} grade, adults encourage students to become more independent and to make choices that may significantly impact their success in high school and ultimately their transition into adult life. Awareness and confusion bring anxiety and fearfulness to the forefront. If students have less support and structure in the home, more support and structure may be appropriate at school, particularly with the increasingly larger at-risk population.

Reviewing prior research, three themes emerged to suggest issues of school safety, school support, and social relationships have the greatest impact on academic success at the middle school level. The dependent variable in this particular study was the overall comfort level of students. Issues of respect, safety, and personal confidence were incorporated into the survey questions. The question of gender or grade level affected a difference between the overall comfort score noted. A triangulation of data from parents,

teachers and students provided insight for adults and school personnel to better support young adolescents as they mature socially and cognitively.

School communities must work together to revisit, revise, and renew their efforts to make sure that each student is comfortable, confident, and mentally healthy each and every day. Academic and social progress goes hand in hand. Students need to see the value of making the very best of their own educational opportunities. We need to continue to encourage students to stretch their minds, and at the same time, provide support and encouragement to those students who struggle to see opportunities for themselves. Rewarding students for doing their personal best may be one key. By helping students to set aside their fears and/or anxieties and recognize the supports available to them, students can make strong individual progress, and become positive, productive members of our communities.

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Appendix A

Letter to Parent or Guardian

October 28, 2004

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a doctoral student in the School of Educational Leadership and Foundations at Indiana State University working under the supervision of Todd Whitaker, Ph.D. I am conducting a research project on adolescent fears and anxieties of middle school students. I request permission for your child to participate in a survey.

The study consists of questions about the overall level of comfort students feel while they are at school. The project will be explained in terms that your child can understand, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so. There will not be any way to link answers on the survey to a specific student. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only. To obtain a copy of the results, you are welcome to contact the researcher at 812-232-2900.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect the services normally provided to your child by the faculty and staff at the middle school. Even if you give your permission for your child to participate, your child is free to refuse to participate. If your child agrees to participate, he or she is free to end participation at any time. You and your child are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your child's participation in this research study.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me at 812-232-2900 or Dr. Todd Whitaker, faculty sponsor, at 812-237-2904 or T-Whitaker@indstate.edu. Keep this letter after completing the next page. Please return the permission information to the middle school administration office in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at 114 Erickson Hall, Terre Haute, IN 47809, or phone at (812) 237-8217, or email the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

Sincerely,

Carrie Milner
Doctoral Student/Project Researcher

Dr. Todd Whitaker
Doctoral Committee Chair/Project Director

ISU IRB Number: 5008
Date of Approval: 11-09-04
Approval Expiration Date: 9-2-05

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below and by signing your name and returning the permission form to the middle school administration office in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope. Keep the information letter for your records.

_____ I do grant permission for my child to participate in Mrs. Carrie Milner's study on adolescent fears and anxieties in the middle school setting.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child to participate in Mrs. Carrie Milner's study on adolescent fears and anxieties in the middle school setting.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian **Printed Parent/Guardian Name**

_____ _____

Printed Name of Student(s)

Child's Grade _____ _____

ISU IRB Number: 5008
Date of Approval: 11-09-04
Approval Expiration Date: 9-2-05

Appendix B

Letter to Teachers

October 28, 2004

ISU IRB Number 5008
Date of Approval: 11-09-04
Approval Expiration: 9-2-05

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to participate in a dissertation research project that will examine middle school students' fears and anxieties. Teachers, parents, and students will be asked to complete a Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE) Survey. Data gathered will be used by Carrie Milner, a doctoral student at Indiana State University under the supervision of Todd Whitaker, PhD., to better understand student behavior of middle school students. Your assistance is vital to the completion of this study. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Your participation in completing this survey is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you refuse to participate. The return of a completed survey indicates your consent to participate.

Please be assured that individual responses will be kept completely confidential and used in no other manner than to provide data for this study. Surveys have been numbered to link data and identify specific grade levels to student surveys. There are no personal benefits, however, by completing the survey, you will have an opportunity to influence future student response behaviors. Survey responses received will also be used to identify guidance programs for additional study of student behaviors and school climate.

Participation in completing this survey is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you refuse to participate. Please be assured that data collected from this study will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Surveys have been numbered to link data and identify groups who have not returned surveys; however, once all data is returned, the list will be destroyed eliminating any future ability to link specific grade levels to their surveys. Be assured that the survey will be anonymous. The results will not be shared with any building administrators, and the results will be aggregated so that no individual's answer can be inferred. By completing the survey, participants will have an opportunity to influence the understanding of adolescent behaviors and the effect those behaviors may have on academic success.

After completing the survey, fold, seal, and return it in the self addressed envelope. To ensure confidentiality, surveys returned in an unsealed envelope will not be considered in the data analysis. If you would prefer, you may mail the survey directly to Dr. Todd Whitaker, Faculty Sponsor, Indiana State University, School of Education, Terre Haute, IN 47809. If you have any questions at all, please contact Carrie Milner at 812-232-2900 or Dr. Todd Whitaker at 812-237-2904 or T-Whitaker@indstate.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at 114 Erickson Hall, Terre Haute, IN 47809, or phone at (812) 237-8217, or email the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study

Thank you for your assistance in this research study. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Carrie Milner
Doctoral Student/Project Researcher

Dr. Todd Whitaker
Doctoral Committee Chair/Project Director

Appendix C

Assent to Participate

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Study of Cloverdale Middle School Students

Doing My Personal Best While I'm at School

My name is Mrs. Carrie Milner. I am completing a research project as a student from Indiana State University with help from Dr. Todd Whitaker who is also from Indiana State. We are asking you to take part in a research study to learn more about how students at Cloverdale Middle School feel about social interactions with their classmates, and if they recognize the support available from teachers and staff members while they are in school.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer questions read by your teacher. This is not a test. No one will link your answers to you or your family. While there are no direct benefits to you, your answers will help us to be able to look at the concerns of groups of students. We want you to be able to do your personal best while you're at school.

Please talk this over with your parents. Your parents have given their permission for you to take part in this study. Even though your parents said "yes," you can still decide not to do this. If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.

You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me at 812-232-2900. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study.

_____
Signature of Student

_____ _____
Printed Name of Student Date

ISU IRB Number: 5008
Date of Approval: 11-09-04
Approval Expiration Date: 9-2-05

Cloverdale Community Schools – Middle School

Parent Survey	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Our school provides sufficient opportunities for parent involvement.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Our school provides students and teachers with a safe and orderly environment.	5	4	3	2	1
3. School Counselors give students the help they need to solve personal problems.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Students show respect for each other.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Students are provided safe transportation to and from school.	5	4	3	2	1
6. A cooperative support environment exists between teachers, parents and students.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Students trust each other and value individual differences among their peers.	5	4	3	2	1
8. Students feel good about what is happening at school and are confident, cheerful and self-disciplined.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Lunch recess and passing periods are times students can enjoy being with friends.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Giving oral reports or speeches is a good way to earn grades and share knowledge.	5	4	3	2	1
11. School uniforms would be a good thing for our school to consider	5	4	3	2	1
12. Students recognize the importance of good manners and good citizenship	5	4	3	2	1
13. Good school citizens possess the skills necessary to work through conflicts without resorting to violence.	5	4	3	2	1
14. Students treat others the way they would like to be treated.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Respect, honesty and responsibility are positive qualities shared by students in our schools	5	4	3	2	1
16. Students feel safe when they are at school.	5	4	3	2	1
17. Our school cares about students as individuals.	5	4	3	2	1
18. When students have personal problems, they can talk confidentially with an adult.	5	4	3	2	1
19. Patience and understanding from caring adults help students make good choices.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Parents take an active role in their children's education.	5	4	3	2	1

Cloverdale Community Schools – Middle School

Teacher Survey	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Our school provides sufficient opportunities for parent involvement.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Our school provides students and teachers with a safe and orderly environment.	5	4	3	2	1
3. School Counselors give students the help they need to solve personal problems.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Students show respect for each other.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Students are provided safe transportation to and from school.	5	4	3	2	1
6. A cooperative support environment exists between teachers, parents and students.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Students trust each other and value individual differences among their peers.	5	4	3	2	1
8. Students feel good about what is happening at school and are confident, cheerful and self-disciplined.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Lunch recess and passing periods are times students can enjoy being with friends.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Giving oral reports or speeches is a good way to earn grades and share knowledge.	5	4	3	2	1
11. School uniforms would be a good thing for our school to consider	5	4	3	2	1
12. Students recognize the importance of good manners and good citizenship	5	4	3	2	1
13. Good school citizens possess the skills necessary to work through conflicts without resorting to violence.	5	4	3	2	1
14. Students treat others the way they would like to be treated.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Respect, honesty and responsibility are positive qualities shared by students in our schools	5	4	3	2	1
16. Students feel safe when they are at school.	5	4	3	2	1
17. Our school cares about students as individuals.	5	4	3	2	1
18. When students have personal problems, they can talk confidentially with an adult.	5	4	3	2	1
19. Patience and understanding from caring adults help students make good choices.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Parents take an active role in their children's education.	5	4	3	2	1