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Students Feeling Unsafe in School: Fifth Graders' Experiences

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Abstract

Children of late elementary school age (fifth grade) provide evidence that many do not feel safe in their schools. The purpose of this study was to examine how children express their experiences of feeling unsafe in school. Questions guiding the study were: What percentage of children in this sample report feeling unsafe at school? What are the after-effects of feeling unsafe? How do children describe what makes them feel unsafe? Participants included 243 fifth grade students who, as part of their participation in a larger study, were asked, “*Have you felt unsafe at school?*” Children responding affirmatively described what made them feel unsafe. Fifty-seven (23.8%) participants indicated they sometimes or always felt unsafe at school, citing teasing, bullying, or other threats that typically occurred when adults were not present. Nearly a third reported being stressed and almost half felt at slight or great risk because of feeling unsafe. When children feel unsafe in school, there are implications for schools, neighborhoods, and larger communities. The related potential for children’s increased involvement in health risk behaviors because they feel unsafe merits immediate and thoughtfully-planned action.

Keywords

School safety; Research; Child and Adolescent Health; Bullying

“My son does well academically in school and plays soccer—quite well. The boys in his grade were mad that he blocked their soccer goals and that he knew answers to questions in class. Then, in fourth grade, one boy decided that no one should be friends with him. That bully got the other kids to tease my son and called him a wimp. No one would play with him. There was an incident when two older boys threatened to throw him out of the second floor window after chess club. I met with the teacher, the principal, and the social worker and they helped him cope with the situation. To try to change the culture I started an after-school sports club for the fourth grade boys. I organized it, and paid for it, and found college soccer players to help.... That helped with the end of fourth grade. But then there was fifth grade. The bullying began quickly at the beginning of the school year. My son became very fearful. First he was afraid of thunderstorms, then rain, then clouds. He wouldn’t leave the house unless it was a cloudless day. We went to therapy and with the help of a psychologist and the school principal; we were able to move him to another school. He is happy now and has many friends. In this school, although the boys have to deal with social issues, there is no concern for bodily safety or being systematically ostracized. In this school bullying is not tolerated...”

(A conversation with a parent of a fifth-grade student)

Background

Many adults assume that school is an environment that is nurturing, that it provides opportunities to pursue knowledge and to achieve personal growth. However, students provide compelling evidence that they do not feel safe in their school. Nearly 6% of American high school students reported they stayed home from school in the last 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to and from school. Many such students are victims of, or witnesses to, interpersonal violence, bullying and aggressive behavior, drug trafficking, or intruders prompting building lockdowns, (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/ss/ss5704.pdf> accessed March 2, 2010). Despite this fact, feeling unsafe at school has not been the focus of a deliberate assessment of later elementary school-aged children. Through the interpretation of children's responses to an interview question in a larger study, this paper documents the experiences of children in the fifth grade who, reported feeling unsafe at school.

Literature Review

Definition—Researchers and therapists have used a fear scale (Burnham & Gullone, 1997) that lists items which could potentially be a source of children's fears, for responders to rate. They also may conduct an assessment of the child's social environment when children are referred to school support staff about difficulties (Bowen, Wooley, Richman, & Bowen, 2001). Neither approach focuses on the child's description of what makes him/her feel unsafe at school. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2004) does not offer a working or precise definition of "unsafe," despite the fact that the term is used in their Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) which is administered to high school students across the United States. The middle school YRBSS does not contain an item to assess feeling unsafe at school. Factors that may contribute to a definition of feeling unsafe include (a) the sense that no one is in charge and that peers are involved in negative behaviors (Mijanovich & Weitzman, 2003), and (b) the feeling of an underlying current of hostility and violence (Dupper & Myer-Adams, 2002). In the context of this paper, the term *feeling unsafe* refers to feeling insecure, unprotected, or in harm's way.

Prevalence—The prevalence of students who report feeling unsafe in school is noteworthy. From 1993 to 2007, school absences due to concern for safety rose from 4.4% to 5.5% (CDC, 2010). One survey of middle school students reported that nearly 13% of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students missed class because they felt unsafe in school and 27% reported they were threatened with violence (Orpinas, et al., 2000). Over 39% of eighth grade students who responded to the Pride Surveys, which examine student safety and drug use among students in grades 6–12, reported that they threatened to slap, hit, or kick another student. (Gleaton, 2006).

Where do children feel unsafe? Research has shown that children feel unsafe in their schools and their neighborhoods, but conclusions were inconsistent. According to Singer and colleagues (1999), students in Grades 3–8 living in large cities, small cities, and rural areas reported witnessing more violence at school than in the community. In contrast, other investigators (Dowdell, 2006; Gleaton, 2006) reported that children living in distressed, urban neighborhoods may view their schools as safer, and less threatening, than their neighborhoods. Although the majority of respondents in a small sample of Philadelphia seventh grade parochial school students characterized their school as a safe place because it was a drug- and weapon-free zone with visible adult supervision, only 25% indicated that they always or almost always felt safe in their neighborhoods, citing violence, the presence of drugs, and having no safe place to gather after school (Dowdell, 2006). In other studies (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Dane County Youth Commission, 2000; Mijanovich & Weitzman,

2003) of neighborhood and school characteristics associated with feeling unsafe, children in distressed neighborhoods had a greater chance of feeling unsafe than their counterparts in less distressed neighborhoods. Disorder in the school, meaning schoolmates “get away with anything,” was a powerful determinant of the children’s unsafe feelings (Mijanovich & Weitzman, 2003).

Children have identified school-related places where they are most likely to feel unsafe as: on the bus, traveling to and from school, in the cafeteria, near their lockers, in the halls, on the playground, and in gym locker rooms (Selekman & Vessey, 2004). The common factor in these locations is the absence of an adult who holds formal responsibility for the area.

Advances in communication technology have provided an additional area in which children report feeling unsafe. Ybarra, Diener-West, and Leaf (2007) studied internet and e-mail bullying and aggressive behavior. They reported that children who receive rude or nasty comments via text message were more likely to report feeling unsafe at school than their counterparts who did not receive such messages.

Bullying—According to the National Association of School Nurses, bullying is “dynamic and repetitive persistent patterns of verbal and/or nonverbal behaviors directed by one or more children on another child that are intended to deliberately inflict physical, verbal, or emotional abuse, in the presence of a real or perceived power differential” (Selekman & Vessey, 2004, p. 246). Bullying can occur directly in the form of hitting; shoving and tripping; taking lunch money or homework; taking or damaging belongings; taunting, teasing or verbal harassment; or causing embarrassment by any form of public humiliation. Indirect bullying occurs when one gets another to bully someone, spreads rumors, deliberately excludes someone from a group or activity, or sets one person against another. Cyber-bullying can occur through e-mail, instant messaging, web pages, chat rooms, discussion groups, or text messaging (Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007). Many definitions of bullying are found in the literature. The definitions share an emphasis on persistence of the behavior and an imbalance of power.

Recognizing that feeling unsafe is an issue in late elementary school students, Glew, et al. (2005) surveyed 3,500 fifth grade students in an urban, West Coast school district to determine the prevalence of bullying during elementary school and its association with school attendance, academic achievement, disciplinary action, self-reported feelings of sadness, safety, and belonging. The authors concluded that a major reason for feeling unsafe at school was bullying: being a victim, perpetrator, or both. Children who reported feeling unsafe at school had 2.5 times the odds of being a bully and five times the odds of being a victim of a bully as did other students. Furthermore, the consequences extend beyond elementary school: boys who were identified as bullies in middle school were four times as likely as their non-bullying peers to have more than one criminal conviction by age 24 (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp?area=main>). Both the short and long term negative impact of bullying and being bullied has received increasing attention due to the school shootings throughout the United States.

Correlates and after-effects—The identified behavioral correlates of feeling unsafe, whether from bullying or other causes, include serious health risks. That is, children who feel unsafe are more likely than others to engage in health risk behaviors, according to Dowdell and Santucci (2003), who documented correlations between children feeling unsafe and (a) carrying a gun or knife, (b) recently experiencing trouble with the police, (c) getting into a physical fight, (d) using alcohol or other drugs, (e) getting inadequate sleep, (f) missing school due to illness, (g) experiencing depression, (h) engaging in early and

unprotected sexual activity, including adolescent childbearing, and (i) giving a lower rating to their health.

Purpose of the Study

Research suggests that feeling unsafe may be associated with significant health risk behaviors such as weapon carrying among school-aged children. Therefore, the specific purpose of this study was to examine how children as young as ten years of age describe their experiences of feeling unsafe at school. The research questions were:

1. What percentage of children in this sample report feeling unsafe at school?
2. What are the after-effects of feeling unsafe as reported by the children?
3. How do children describe the events that make them feel unsafe?

Methods

This was a secondary data analysis using both quantitative and qualitative data from the primary study. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Boards for the Protection of Human Participants at the investigators' universities and the school districts from which youth were recruited.

Participants

Study participants included 243 fifth grade students and their parents from a medium-sized city and a large urban area in the Midwest who were participating in a larger, longitudinal study examining parent-child communication and health risk behaviors. In the two study locations, children entered the larger study in their last year of elementary school (the fifth grade), and continued in it through middle school. Inclusion criteria were that the child be in the fifth grade and be free of severe mental or physical limitations that would preclude involvement in data collection procedures, that the participating parent and child speak and understand English, and that they plan to reside in the study area for the next three years.

Instruments

Children's health risk behavior participation was assessed. As part of a larger, longitudinal study, fifth-grade children completed the Children's Health Risk Behavior Scale (CHRBS), a 21-item screening instrument (Riesch et al., 2006). This instrument, based on the conceptual categories of the YRBSS, assessed potential for unintentional and intentional injury or violence, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, sexual activity, and health practices. Items with potential to change with each opportunity for engaging in the behavior (feeling unsafe at school) were linked with responses *never*, *sometimes*, *always*. The assessment of potential for intentional injury or violence includes the item, "*Have you felt unsafe at school?*" Youth may respond *never*, *sometimes*, or *always*. Several CHRBS items stimulate a logic tree response format to further investigate a risk behavior. When a child responded *sometimes* or *always* to *Have you felt unsafe at school?* the logic tree questions were triggered to further evaluate and substantiate the experience. The logic tree items constituted measurement of the after-effects of feeling unsafe, and included the items listed in Table 2.

The CHRBS was administered using a handheld computer-assisted survey interview format. The 21 items were programmed onto a Personal Data Assistant (PDA) using Pendragon forms (Bobula et al. 2004). Using Flesch-Kincaid scoring, the CHRBS reading level calculated at grade level 3.4 and the reading ease at 82.2. The CHRBS was reported to be a

reliable and valid measure for assessing late elementary school-aged children's participation in health risk behaviors (Riesch et al., 2006).

Social characteristics of the sample were collected from the child and the parent, to describe the sample. Children provided (a) their age in years and their birth date; (b) their race, ethnicity, and gender; (c) their grade in school; (d) a description of their academic grades; and (e) whether or not a parent or adult is present when the child comes home from school, during dinner, and at bedtime.

The adults provided (a) their age in years and their birth date; (b) their marital status; (c) their highest grade of education completed; (d) their employment status; (e) the families' annual income in \$10K increments from \$9,999 to \$50,000+; (f) their race and ethnicity, with response choices of African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, or European American or White; and (g) their gender.

Procedure

Participant recruitment—In the larger study, the purpose of which was to test the outcomes of a communication skills training program, large- and mid-sized public school districts served as recruitment sites for study participants. Invitations to participate were sent to 4,711 fifth grade school children and their parents through 28 schools in the medium-sized city and five schools in the large urban area. Families responded directly to the study offices in each city, were screened, and enrolled in the study. Of the 485 families who responded, 361 met eligibility criteria, and 302 were consented.

Data collection—The data collection occurred between May 2005 and February 2008 in the participants' homes or another private place of their choosing. Signed parental informed consent and child assent were obtained prior to data collection. Adults and children completed the surveys separately from one another.

When child participants responded *sometimes* or *always* to the item *Have you felt unsafe at school?* they were prompted to answer further questions. Once the survey was completed, the PDA was returned to the interviewer. The interviewer received an alert that the respondent had indicated feeling unsafe at school, so that the veracity of the answer could be checked. If confirmed, the interviewer probed for information regarding what the participant meant by feeling unsafe and recorded the statements using a standardized form, the Feeling Unsafe Report. The adult (typically the child's parent) was informed and the child and parent were asked whether they would like the matter reported to school staff. Project administrative staff contacted the adult family member for a follow-up conversation.

Data analysis—The data from the CHRBS were examined for completeness and analyzed for frequencies and measures of central tendency. Children's responses, as recorded by the data collectors, were manually analyzed using a method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to inductively determine themes or categories. First, each child's report of feeling unsafe was reviewed individually by the five members of the study team (authors). Second, the team discussed the overall ideas represented in the participant reports. Third, a coding scheme of six themes was agreed upon. Fourth, each study team member sorted participant responses according to theme. Fifth, team members reached consensus about the participant reports that were coded according to theme. Data analysis of this nature is an iterative approach that requires the researchers to revisit and then refine themes when necessary (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Results

The characteristics of the participants and their families are described in Table 1. Generally, family characteristics were similar between those children who said they feel unsafe and those who did not say that they feel unsafe. Notably, ten percent of children who said they feel unsafe reported being of more than one race, compared to six percent of children who did not report feeling unsafe. Similarly, five percent of children who felt unsafe reported F's for academic grades, in contrast to five-tenths of one percent of children who reported not feeling unsafe.

Percentage of the Youth Who Reported Feeling Unsafe at School

When asked, *Have you felt unsafe in school?* fifty-seven of 243 study participants (23.8%) responded *sometimes* or *always*. The majority of these participants spoke of teasing, bullying, or other threats that typically occurred when adults were not present.

After-effects of Feeling Unsafe at School

The after-effects of feeling unsafe included staying home from school, curtailing activities, feeling threatened because of race or color, experiencing emotional or stressful reactions, and feeling at risk. The frequencies of these items are summarized in Table 2. Most of the participants did not stay home because of feeling unsafe, were not threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and did not reduce or give up activities because they felt unsafe. However, more than a third reported sometimes or always feeling unsafe going to and from school.

Some participants reported feeling threatened due to race or were unsure about this. In particular, as displayed in Table 1, none of the children who identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native and one of the four respondents who identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander reported to feel threatened because of race or color. Of the ten respondents who identified as African American, one felt threatened because of race or color, and four were unsure or did not know. Of the 47 respondents who identified as Euro American, four indicated they felt threatened because of race or color and seven were unsure or did not know. Finally, one of the five respondents who identified as Hispanic felt threatened because of race or color; one was unsure or did not know. More than a third of the 57 responders in this group reported being stressed and 44% reported having emotional problems due to feeling unsafe.

How Children Describe the Events that Make Them Feel Unsafe

Coding of the responses revealed six themes. The themes reflected (a) direct teasing, threats and bullying; (b) observed aggressive behavior and threats; (c) environmental conditions; (d) recalling events that had occurred in earlier school grades, (e) academic stressors; and (f) other.

Direct teasing, threats, or bullying—During completion of the Feeling Unsafe Report, 28 participants (49% who responded *sometimes* or *always* and 12% of all participants) indicated they were directly teased, threatened, pushed, called names, sworn at, or hit at school. One participant reported that often boys made fun of her and this made her feel like she didn't want to go to school. Another participant indicated that he did not join in some playground activities as a result of the way he had been treated. Eleven participants specifically included the term *bully* or *bullying* in their dialogue with the interviewers and subsequently with parents.

Observed aggressive behavior and threats—Twenty-seven participants (47% of those who responded *sometimes* or *always* and 11% of all participants) indicated that they felt unsafe for reasons other than being teased, and unrelated to academics. These incidents created a general feeling of uneasiness resulting from (a) witnessing fighting or bullying, (b) knowing of the presence of weapons and gangs, (c) feeling vulnerable to unruly students, (d) witnessing drug dealing, (e) hearing of a possible child enticement, and (f) other perceived threats.

Environmental Conditions—Eight participants (14% of those who responded *sometimes* or *always* and 3% of all participants) indicated they felt unsafe as a result of environmental conditions such as fire and tornado drills and severe weather warnings. One participant indicated he felt afraid because of the decaying physical structure of the school.

Recalling Events That Occurred in Earlier Grades—Five participants shared experiences from earlier school years, most during third grade, which brought on feelings of being unsafe. The children indicated that these threats were no longer present in their everyday lives.

Academic Stressors—Two participants cited academic stressors as a reason for feeling unsafe at school. They described worries about their performance on assignments or examinations.

Other—Two participants did not provide further information after responding that they felt unsafe; in both cases parents indicated they were aware of the circumstances. Another discussed classmates whom she described as *weird*, and did not elaborate.

Discussion

Summary

Almost one-quarter of the fifth grade public elementary school sample reported feeling unsafe at school. Participants who felt unsafe were similar in social characteristics to those who did not report feeling unsafe. The after-effects of feeling unsafe included missing about one day of school per month, feeling stress, experiencing emotional problems due to feeling unsafe, and thinking that people risk harming themselves physically and in other ways when they feel unsafe. Participants identified sources of their unsafe feelings: direct teasing, threats, and bullying; observed aggressive behavior and threats; environmental conditions; recalling events that had occurred in earlier school grades; academic stressors; and other experiences.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have several implications. First, they are consistent with earlier studies and second, the findings imply that current thinking about bullying should be expanded to all situations that contribute to children feeling unsafe in their school. Third, the finding reported elsewhere, that children who feel unsafe are likely to engage in other health risk behaviors, calls for a thoughtful response. Finally, school nurses are in an ideal position, individually and through their national association, to conceptualize steps toward a safe school environment to address bullying and children feeling unsafe. School nurses' responsibilities include assessing risk related to safety and personal harm and proactively responding to potentially threatening situations (NASN, 2005).

Consistency with earlier studies—The responses of the participants in this study are consistent with those of older youth who participated in studies addressing both feeling

unsafe and bullying. The children in this study revealed that they worry more about daily uncivil behaviors than they do about horrific events reported on the national news reports. Participants' reports in this study corroborate results of previous studies documenting teasing, bullying, and other threatening behaviors (Glew, et al 2005; Orpinas et al 2007). That children feel unsafe for academic reasons is a reminder that, for some children, academic expectations or perceived pressure merits understanding. It is noteworthy that incidents from earlier grades were of sufficient significance to be remembered when this question was presented.

Bullying, and most likely feeling unsafe in general, is a systems problem that requires a "multifaceted, systematic approach that includes all community stakeholders" (Garrett, 2003, p. 17). It is recommended that Garrett's (2003) systems approach to bullying be expanded to include all factors that make children feel unsafe, including observed threats, environmental conditions, and academic stressors.

Children who feel unsafe are likely to engage in other health risk behaviors—

The finding that children who feel unsafe also may be more likely to engage in health risk behaviors (Dowdell & Santucci, 2004) and have 2.5 times greater risk of bullying and five times greater risk of being bullied further validates the need for intervention programs (Glew et al 2005). Recognizing the association between crime in the community and male students' perception of school danger, Bowen and Bowen (1999) strongly recommended that interventions be based on an ecological perspective, and include all relevant personnel in the school, neighborhood, and wider community. Community-based interventions may have the greatest potential for positive effects (Burnham & Gullone, 1997). The attention of school personnel, families, and health care providers is necessary to begin a community-focused approach to this issue. School nurses are in a position to involve parents, school staff, and community members in planning and implementing interventions addressing these concerns.

School nurse implications—Proactive steps identified by Selekman and Praeger (2006) to be taken by school nurses who become aware of bullying may logically be expanded to any situation that makes a child feel unsafe. The first step is classroom discussions. These discussions are recommended to address reasons for bullying, why people who watch don't act when they witness bullying, and how it feels to be bullied or to bully others. Secondly, school nurses can work to promote a trusting environment where students are assured that adults are present and equipped to take action on their behalf. Third, by leading the way in setting clear expectations within and surrounding the building, and eliminating the areas or the characteristics of the areas where children report feeling unsafe, school nurses can create a zone of safety. Working collaboratively with teachers, support staff and administrative staff, school nurses might also suggest or promote group or individual interventions that warn students about planned safety drills, teach assertiveness to decrease feelings of vulnerability, promote street safety, and encourage communication with parents and school staff (Selekman & Praeger, 2006). Aggressive prevention and intervention programs beginning early in children's lives may improve perceptions of safety.

A supportive family moderates childhood distress (Springer & Phillips, 1992). Thus, programs that address parenting styles and communication between children and parents or other methods designed to boost self-esteem in children may help to prevent feelings of being unsafe (Glew et al., 2005).

Limitations

The findings are applicable only to the 5th grade age group and were elicited from participants at a single point in time. The research focused only on children's *feelings*; the

actual events that triggered the responses were not validated. Nevertheless, children's perceptions become their reality and merit thoughtful responses by adults. Geography, culture, and local, national, and international news events also may have influenced the responses given at a point in time. Each interviewer questioned and prompted the participants based on the responses that emerged in their discussion of feeling unsafe. While this was effective in insuring the child's immediate safety, follow-up questions were unique and open-ended; thus, the type of information and the amount of detail provided by the children varied across narrative reports.

Conclusions

This study merits the attention of school nurses, who practice in a multi-faceted role within the school setting that supports the physical, mental, emotional, and social health of students and their success in the learning process (NASN 2005). Nearly one quarter of fifth grade students surveyed reported feeling unsafe in school. Many were either a victim or a witness to aggressive behaviors including bullying, teasing, and threats. These findings are disturbing and demand a cooperative response by schools, neighborhoods, and larger communities. The potential for concurrent involvement in health risk behaviors, in addition to the long-term psychosocial and behavioral risks of bullying behaviors, calls for immediate and thoughtfully planned action by school staff, parents, and community members. Students are entitled to a safe learning environment.

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Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Participants who Reported Feeling Unsafe N=57		Participants who Did Not Report Feeling Unsafe N=186	
	N	%	N	%
Child Gender				
Boy	25	43.9	93	50
Girl	32	56.1	93	50
Total	57	100	186	100
Parent Partner Status *				
Single	2	3.5	10	5.3
Married or otherwise partnered	50	87.7	151	81.3
Separated	2	3.5	4	2.2
Divorced	2	3.5	18	9.7
Missing	1	1.8	3	1.5
Total	57	100	186	100
Parent Education Level *				
Grammar school or some high school	0	0	1	0.5
High school graduate	4	7.0	7	3.8
Some college or Assoc. degree	9	15.8	27	14.5
College graduate	14	24.6	46	24.7
Some graduate or professional education	8	14.0	23	12.4
Graduate or professional degree	21	36.8	75	40.3
Missing	0	0	3	1.6
Total	57	100	186	100
Parent Employment Status *				
Unemployed	11	19.2	22	11.8
Employed – full or part time	44	77.2	156	83.8
Disabled and not employed	1	1.8	4	2.2
Retired and not employed	1	1.8	1	0.5
Missing	0	0	3	1.7
Total	57	100	186	100
Gross Income Last Year *				
\$9,999 or less	4	7.0	3	1.6
\$10,000–\$19,999	2	3.5	8	4.3
\$20,000–\$29,999	3	5.3	11	5.9
\$30,000–\$39,999	4	7.0	7	3.8
\$40,000–\$49,999	7	12.3	23	12.4
\$50,000–\$74,999	13	22.8	50	26.9
\$75,000–\$99,999	8	14.0	35	18.8

Characteristic	Participants who Reported Feeling Unsafe N=57		Participants who Did Not Report Feeling Unsafe N=186	
	N	%	N	%
Over \$100,000	16	28.1	42	22.6
Missing	0	0	7	3.8
Total	57	100	186	100
Race of Child				
American Indian, Alaska Native	0	0	1	0.5
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	4	7.0	7	3.8
Black or African-American	4	7.0	13	7.0
European American or White	42	73.7	146	78.5
More than one race	6	10.5	11	5.9
Unknown or not reported	1	1.8	8	4.3
Total	57	100	186	100
Hispanic	5	8.7	11	5.9
Adult Presence				
Adult home after school				
No	9	15.8	37	19.9
Yes	46	80.7	143	76.9
Missing	2	3.5	6	3.2
Total	57	100	186	100
Adult home at dinner				
No	1	1.8	4	2.2
Yes	54	94.7	178	95.6
Missing	2	3.5	4	2.2
Total	57	100	186	100
Adult home at bedtime				
No	2	3.5	0	0
Yes	53	93.0	183	98.4
Missing	2	3.5	3	1.6
Total	57	100	186	100
Self-described kind of student				
One of the best	28	49	76	41
Above the middle	14	25	67	36
In the middle	15	26	41	22
Near the bottom	0	0	1	1
Total	57	100	186	100
Academic grades				
Mostly A's	32	56.1	101	54.3
Mostly B's	17	29.8	63	33.9
Mostly C's and D's	3	5.3	13	7.0

Characteristic	Participants who Reported Feeling Unsafe N=57		Participants who Did Not Report Feeling Unsafe N=186	
	N	%	N	%
Mostly F's	3	5.3	1	.5
Missing	2	3.5	8	4.3
Total	57	100	186	100

* Question answered by parents

Table 2

Frequency of participants' after-effects of feeling unsafe. N=57

ITEM	N	%
1. How often do you feel unsafe at school?		
Sometimes	2	3.6
Usually	54	94.7
Always	1	1.8
2. How often do you feel unsafe on the way to or from school?		
Never	36	63.2
Sometimes	16	28.1
Usually	5	8.8
3. How many times in the past month did you stay home from school because you felt unsafe?		
None	52	91.2
Once	4	7.0
Twice	1	1.8
4. How many times in the past month have you been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property?		
None	46	80.7
Once	7	12.3
Twice	3	5.3
Three Times	1	1.8
5. Have you ever been threatened or hurt because of your race or color?		
No	42	73.7
Yes	6	10.5
Unsure	9	15.8
6. During the last month that you were in school, how stressful were things for you because of feeling unsafe?		
Not at all	30	52.6
Somewhat	18	31.6
Considerably	3	5.3
Extremely	1	1.8
Did not answer	5	8.8
7. During the last month that you were in school, did feeling unsafe at school cause you to reduce or give up important activities?		
Not at all	39	68.5
Somewhat	10	17.5
Did not answer	8	14.0
8. During the last month that you were in school, did feeling unsafe at school cause you to have emotional problems?		
Not at all	27	47.4
Somewhat	19	33.3
Considerably	4	7.0
Extremely	2	3.5
Did not answer	5	8.8

ITEM	N	%
9. How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically and in other ways when they feel unsafe at school?		
No risk	8	14
Slight risk	17	29.8
Moderate risk	5	8.8
Great risk	4	7.0
Can't say or did not answer	23	40.3

Note. These items have a different response set than the initial screening question: *Have you felt unsafe at school?*