
A Child's View: Social and Physical Environmental Features Differentially Predict Parent and Child Perceived Neighborhood Safety

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ABSTRACT *Parent and child perceived neighborhood safety predicts child health outcomes such as sleep quality, asthma, physical activity, and psychological distress. Although previous studies identify environmental predictors of parent perceived safety, little is known about predictors of child perceived safety. This study aims to identify the social and physical environmental neighborhood features that predict child and parent perceived neighborhood safety and, simultaneously, to assess the association between child and parent perceptions. Data were from the QUebec Adipose and Lifestyle InvesTigation in Youth (QUALITY) cohort, an ongoing study of Caucasian children (aged 8–10 years) with a parental history of obesity, and their biological parents from Québec, Canada. Measures of social and physical neighborhood features were collected using a spatial data infrastructure and in-person audits. Structural equation modeling was used to test direct and indirect associations between neighborhood features, child and parent perceived safety. Results suggest that among children (N=494), trees and lighting were positively associated with perceived neighborhood safety, whereas a high proportion of visible minorities was associated with poorer perceived safety. Parents' perceptions of safety were more strongly tied to indicators of disorder and a lack of community involvement, and to traffic. Child perceived safety was partly explained by parent perceived safety, suggesting moderate concordance between perceptions. Although associated with each other, parent and child perceived safety seemed to be determined by distinct environmental features. Though this study focused on determinants of child and parent perceived safety, future research investigating the impact of neighborhood safety on child health should consider both child and parent perspectives.*

KEYWORDS *Québec, Socioecological model, Neighborhood, Safety, Parent, Child*
