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### Authors

Gee, Kevin A  
Cooc, North

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**Will I Be Victimized at School Today?**

**How Schools Influence the Victimization Experiences of Asian American Teenagers**

Kevin A. Gee, Ed.D. (corresponding author)  
Associate Professor  
School of Education  
University of California, Davis  
One Shields Ave.  
Davis, CA 95616  
(530) 752-9334  
kagee@ucdavis.edu

North Cooc, Ed.D  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Special Education  
University of Texas at Austin  
1 University Station  
Austin, TX 78712  
Mail Code: D5300  
ncooc@austin.utexas.edu

### **Abstract**

Schools can play an influential role in the victimization experiences of Asian American youth. We investigated the extent to which characteristics of schools—their disciplinary structure, guardianship role, and the opportunities for exposure to victimization they provide—related to whether Asian American adolescents were physically or socially victimized. Our sample included 1,303 adolescents ( $M_{\text{age}} = 14.8$  years) from six waves of the School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey. Results from logistic regression models show that disciplinary structure and guardianship, in the form of school security measures, were unrelated to victimization. Asian American adolescents with supportive peers had lower odds of physical victimization (odds ratio [OR] = 0.16;  $p < .01$ ) while those exposed to school gangs and physical fights had higher odds of social victimization ( $OR = 2.90$ ;  $p < .001$  and  $OR = 4.97$ ;  $p < .01$ , respectively). Our findings underscore the need for schools to consider strategies beyond commonplace school disciplinary structures and security measures to protect Asian American adolescents from victimization.

*Keywords:* Asian American; schools; peer victimization; adolescents; School Crime Supplement

### **Public Significance Statement**

Our study provides important descriptive evidence on the associations between school characteristics and the victimization of Asian American adolescents, a group often overlooked in the mainstream school victimization literature. While disciplinary structure and guardianship, in the form of school security measures, were unrelated to victimization, students who were exposed to school gangs and physical fights had higher odds of being socially victimized.

## **Will I Be Victimized at School Today?**

### **How Schools Influence the Victimization Experiences of Asian American Teenagers**

Physical beatings, verbal taunts mocking their home languages, racial slurs, and even bullying based on foods they bring from home—these are just some of the documented ways that Asian American youth have been victimized at school (U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Justice, & White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2016). Unfortunately, for some Asian American youth, school victimization is on the rise. In New York, Asian American students reporting that they had been bullied increased 23 percentage points between 2009 and 2012 (Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund & The Sikh Coalition, 2013). Further, among all racial and ethnic groups, Asian American adolescents nationwide experience the highest probability of racial discrimination in school (Cooc & Gee, 2014). In the wake of victimization, adolescents can face serious psychosocial consequences, including anxiety (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Wolke & Lereya, 2015), depression (Juvonen et al., 2003; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007), and internalizing behavior problems (Wolke & Lereya, 2015), effects that can extend well into adulthood (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

To protect Asian American youth from victimization and its potentially harmful psychological consequences, schools can play a critical role in prevention and reduction efforts, especially via strategies that enhance schoolwide awareness of violence aimed at Asian American youth. Yet, except for a handful of studies (Peguero, Popp, & Koo, 2015; Peguero & Williams, 2011), few have explicitly and systematically addressed how schools influence Asian American victimization at the national level. Accordingly, the aim of our study is to offer a new and more expansive view of how schools relate to the victimization of Asian American adolescents. One central research question

guides our study: How do schools influence the physical and social victimization experiences of Asian American adolescents?

## Background

### Schools and Peer Victimization: Conceptual Foundations

*Peer victimization* refers to the intentionally harmful treatment of children by their peers' aggressive behaviors (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). The aggressive behaviors—actual or threatened—can range from direct physical confrontations (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988) to indirect social exclusion (Craig, 1998). To understand the link between schools and victimization, we draw upon two interrelated theoretical frameworks: authoritative disciplinary theory (Gregory et al., 2010) and opportunity theory (Popp, 2012). We rely on these theories not only because of their broad applicability and power in explaining school victimization among adolescents as a whole, but they also help us identify measurable features of schools that can influence Asian American victimization.

**Authoritative Discipline Theory.** The field of family studies and human development provides one lens to conceptualize the link between schools and victimization. The foundations of authoritative disciplinary theory are grounded in theories on parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971). Parents who use an authoritative style consisting of high levels of structure (supervision and monitoring) alongside high levels of support (warmth and caring) can promote positive outcomes for their children. Applied directly to schools (Pellerin, 2005), an authoritative style consists of two approaches that parallel the parenting concepts of structure and support: “firm enforcement of school rules” and “concerted effort[s] to communicate warmth and concern for the well-being of each student” (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 484). High levels of support and structure can enhance adolescents' emotional and cognitive connectedness with schools, thereby helping adolescents with peer interaction (Konold et al., 2014). This enhanced connectedness in tandem with positive peer

interactions promotes a positive schooling environment that can protect adolescents from peer victimization (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015). Consistent with authoritative disciplinary theory, students encounter less victimization if they attend schools that enforce rules (Wynne & Joo, 2011) and have more warmth and peer support (Jeong & Lee, 2013). Conversely, students in schools lacking supportive norms, structures, and relationships are more likely to be victimized (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010).

**Opportunity Theory.** The link between schools and victimization can also be conceptualized using opportunity theory from criminology (Peguero et al., 2015; Popp, 2012). Opportunity theory suggests that school victimization is influenced by: (a) the presence of guardianship, (b) a victim's exposure and proximity to victimizers, and (b) a victimizer's perception of a potential victim's vulnerability or as a "suitable target" (Peguero et al., 2015).

As applied to schools, the first of these factors, guardianship, overlaps with the concept of support under authoritative discipline theory. Guardianship involves, in part, adults affiliated with a child's school and social network (e.g., a teacher, counselor, or administrative support staff member) who can support students during victimization experiences and monitor potential victimizers (Popp, 2012). Popp (2012) found that children with higher levels of support at school had a lower risk of physical and social bullying. Also, students with stronger positive perceptions of adult support were more likely to seek help with bullying or victimization (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010). Beyond social support, schools act as guardians via school security and safety features (Popp, 2012). In fact, schools with higher student perceptions of school safety problems had higher peer victimization rates (Elsaesser, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2013).

The concept of exposure and perceived vulnerability are also relevant for understanding how schools influence victimization. Exposure refers to the frequency and extent to which a particular environment or participation in activities leaves individuals more visible and accessible to those

who are motivated to victimize them (Popp, 2012). For example, exposure to peer victimization is linked to gang presence and drug availability in schools (Wynne & Joo, 2011), as well as participation in different types of school extracurricular activities (Peguero, 2008). Academic-related extracurricular activities can heighten the perception that children are vulnerable (Popp, 2012), while athletics can lessen the perception that students are suitable targets as those involved in sports can be seen as more capable of self-protection (Peguero, 2008).

Although authoritative disciplinary and opportunities theories establish that schools can influence youths' victimization experiences, the majority of the studies supporting both theories have tended to focus broadly on all youth. However, a growing number of studies provide insight into how these theories translate directly to the experiences of Asian American adolescents.

### **Schools and Asian American Peer Victimization: Prior Empirical Evidence**

To date, Hong et al. (2014) provide the most comprehensive review of how schools influence the victimization of Asian Americans. Their review, alongside more recent work by Peguero, Popp and Koo (2015), reveals limited exploration of authoritative disciplinary theory as it applies to the experience of Asian American students. The evidence that support and guardianship, especially via teachers, can help Asian Americans remains relatively modest, whereas the role of both support and school disciplinary structure remains understudied. For instance, a study of Korean American youth in Grades 3 to 12 demonstrated that teachers can promote empathy towards those experiencing bullying (Choi & Cho, 2013). Yet, it is unclear whether social support can also mitigate victimization, especially among a broader population of Asian American adolescents. Further, of the studies that have provided insights into how schools affect Asian American victimization (Peguero and Williams, 2011; Peguero et al., 2015), the role of school disciplinary structure and social support remain largely untested.

While empirical evidence for authoritative disciplinary theory remains limited, there is more robust support for opportunity theory, particularly via the exposure to different types of extracurriculars. As Hong and colleagues (2014) note, Asian American adolescents who participated in sports faced an increased risk of victimization. Among a nationwide sample of Asian American 10th graders from the Education Longitudinal Study (ELS) of 2002, those who participated more frequently in interscholastic sports were victimized more frequently relative to their White counterparts (Peguero & Williams, 2011). This finding corroborates more recent work demonstrating that 10th grade Asian Americans' risk of violent victimization increased by approximately 13% as their participation in athletic extracurriculars increased (Peguero et al., 2015). Both of these findings are reflected in opportunity theory because participation in these activities can increase their exposure to potential victimizers as well as enhance their suitability as targets for their victimizers. Further, victimization of Asian American youth participating in sports can reflect a type of "backlash" (Peguero & Williams, 2011, p. 548) or "social penalty" (p. 556) for not conforming to particular stereotypes—one stereotype of Asian Americans is that they have strong academic success, but limited athletic abilities (Peguero & Williams, 2011).

Academic achievement and participation in academic extracurriculars (e.g., student government) are also associated with victimization. Research shows that Asian American 10th graders with higher standardized test scores on math and reading had a higher likelihood of being victimized (Peguero & Williams, 2011), while the risk of violent victimization increased by 34.5% if they participated more often in academic extracurriculars (Peguero et al., 2015). Similar to participating in sports, engaging in academic-related activities may reflect the suitable target concept underlying opportunity theory—those who are more academically inclined may be perceived by offenders as "weak" (Peguero, Popp & Koo, 2015, p. 326). However, Cooc and Gee



(2014) found that higher achieving Asian Americans in high school experienced a lower probability of being victimized, suggesting that academics may also have a protective effect.

Although the evidence on Asian American victimization provides only a partial picture of how schools can mitigate victimization for Asian American youth, we do know that if left unchecked, exposure to violence and victimization can manifest in harmful psychological consequences. For example, a small-scale study of Korean American adolescents showed that bullying was related to elevated depression (Shin, D'Antonio, Son, Kim, & Park, 2011). Also, Chinese American adolescents exposed to violence not only had higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, but they engaged in more violent behaviors (Ozer & McDonald, 2006). Finally, beyond suffering psychological effects, Asian Americans who faced victimization had increased somatic symptoms, particularly when they had low engagement with their mothers (Maffini, Wong, & Shin, 2011). Collectively, these consequences underscore the importance of developing a more comprehensive understanding of how schools influence the victimization of Asian Americans.

### **Present Study**

Our present study makes two new advances to the literature on the school victimization of Asian American youth. First, we examine a more holistic set of school factors drawn from authoritative disciplinary and opportunity theories. While prior studies on Asian American victimization have examined individual elements such as school support and exposure, none to our knowledge have examined them together, especially both disciplinary structure and support.

Second, we use nationwide data that researchers have yet to fully leverage to investigate Asian American victimization—the School Crime Supplement (SCS) of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Prior research on predictors of Asian American victimization from Peguero et al. (2015) and Peguero and Williams (2011) has focused on a single grade level (10<sup>th</sup> graders). In contrast, by leveraging the SCS data, we examine the victimization experiences of Asian Americans

adolescents for a broader grade range (6th through 12th) as well as in both public and private middle and high schools across the US.

Accordingly, the objective of our study is to investigate the relationship between schools—their disciplinary structure, their guardianship role, and the opportunities for exposure to victimization they provide—and the physical and social victimization of Asian American adolescents. Based on authoritative discipline and opportunity theories alongside prior empirical evidence on Asian American victimization, we posit three main hypotheses:

1. Asian American adolescents who attend schools with higher disciplinary structure (e.g., enforcement and fairness of school rules) will experience a lower probability of victimization.
2. Asian American adolescents who attend schools with higher levels of support and guardianship (e.g., peer and adult support, school security and safety) will experience a lower probability of victimization.
3. Asian American adolescents who engage in athletic and academic extracurricular activities at school will experience a higher probability of victimization.

## **Method**

### **Dataset and Sample**

We used six separate cross sections (biennially from 2005 to 2015) from the School Crime Supplement (SCS) of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) (U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008, 2009a; United States Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). The NCVS provides the largest national forum on criminal victimization in the United States. Households are selected for the survey based on addresses obtained from the most recent census. The SCS is administered biennially to adolescents ages 12 to 18 enrolled in either a public or private school and

living in a household selected to complete the NCVS. The supplement, administered in-person using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), asks adolescents about their experiences with, and perceptions of crime and safety at school. Racial and ethnic information for SCS respondents comes from the head of household. We focus only on respondents whose heads of household identified them as Asian and not in combination with another racial or ethnic designation. Additional detail on Asian ethnicity or generational status was not captured on the survey. Since the NCVS data is publicly available and contains no individually identifiable information, this study was not considered human subjects research and was not subject to Institutional Review Board (IRB) review.

Our analytic sample (unweighted) consisted of 1,303 Asian American adolescents in 6th through 12th grades who responded to the SCS ( $n = 284$  in 2005;  $n = 215$  in 2007;  $n = 155$  in 2009;  $n = 206$  in 2011;  $n = 233$  in 2013; and  $n = 210$  in 2015). While the NCVS uses an incoming and outgoing rotation system, there is no overlap in these respondent samples over time because only respondents who are new to the study are represented in the SCS data files (Lessne, Cidade, Gerke, Roland, & Sinclair, 2016). When weighted, the Asian American subsample has been used in prior research to draw inferences to the broader population of Asian American adolescents in the United States (National Academies of Sciences, 2016). The Asian American subsample was, on average, 14.8 years old and included slightly more males (54%) versus females (46%). Adolescents tended to come from households possessing some college education or above (60%) and a majority of them attended public school (92%).

## Measures

**Peer victimization.** Our outcomes are whether, in the past school year, students reported that they experienced physical victimization or social victimization. Based on prior peer victimization research (Gee & Cho, 2014; Popp, 2012; Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel, 2010; Wang, Iannotti, &

Nansel, 2009), our physical and social victimization measures come from students' responses to a SCS survey item asking whether during the current school year another student had: "Pushed you, shoved you, tripped you, or spit on you?" (physical); "Excluded you from activities on purpose?" (social); "Spread rumors about you?" (social); or "Made fun of you, called you names, or insulted you?" (social). We coded students' responses dichotomously (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*). We combined students' responses to the three social victimization items into one measure that we coded 1 if students responded *yes* to any type of social victimization, 0 otherwise.

**Disciplinary structure.** Consistent with Gregory et al. (2010), we used the Experience of School Rules scale as a measure of a school's disciplinary structure. Students were asked on a 4-point scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*) the extent to which: (a) everyone knows what the school rules are, (b) the school rules are fair, (c) the punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are, (d) the school rules are strictly enforced, and (e) if a school rule is broken, students know what kind of punishment will follow (U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009b, p. 5). The five items had a reliability of .76. Using factor analysis, we composited these items into a disciplinary structure index. A Kaiser test showed that there was one meaningful factor to retain (Eigenvalue = 2.54) that best summarized the items. Each item loaded equally high on this one factor with loadings all close to .70, demonstrating that each item was highly correlated with this singular factor. We derived a continuous factor score ( $M = 0$ ,  $SD = 1$ ) with higher scores indicating that the student perceived their schools to have a higher level of disciplinary structure.

**Support and guardianship.** We constructed separate measures for peer support, adult support, and guardianship. For peer support, students reported on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*) whether they had a friend at school to talk to, cared about their feelings, or cared for what happened to them. We coded their responses dichotomously, equaling 1

if the student strongly agreed or agreed to having such a friend, 0 otherwise (i.e., they disagreed or strongly disagreed). We dichotomized this predictor based on results from a general linearized hypothesis (GLH) test showing no significant difference between the *strongly agree* and *agree* as well as the *strongly disagree* and *disagree* categories.

For adult support, students reported on a reported on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*) whether there was an adult at school who they could talk to, who cared about their feelings and what happened to them. We coded students from the 2005 through 2011 waves as having adult support if they agreed or strongly agreed (= 1), 0 otherwise. Again, we combined the *strongly agree* and *agree* responses as well as the *strongly disagree* and *disagree* responses based on results of a GLH test. Because the survey questions about adult support for the 2013 and 2015 surveys were worded differently than those for 2005 through 2011, we coded students from the 2013 and 2015 waves as having adult support if they agreed or strongly agreed that there was an adult a school who cared about them or listened to them.

Based on prior work by Popp (2012), we operationalized guardianship based on nine school security and safety features. Students were asked whether the school had: (a) security guards or assigned policy officers, (b) other school staff or other adults supervising the hallway, (c) metal detectors, (d) locked entrance of exit doors during the day, (e) a requirement that visitors sign in, (f) locker checks, (g) a requirement that students wear badges or picture identification, (h) one or more security cameras to monitor the school, and (i) a code of student conduct (U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009b, p. 4). We coded each response dichotomously (i.e., according to the student, the security feature existed at school = 1 or did not exist = 0). An exploratory factor analysis of the items revealed four factors; but as the reliabilities of the items underlying each factor were low ( $\alpha < .30$ ), we included each item as a predictor.

**Exposure.** Our measures of exposure focused on extracurricular activities, academic disengagement, and the presence of guns, fights, and gangs in schools. Similar to Popp (2012), we included binary measures of whether students participated in four types of school-sponsored extracurricular activities: athletic teams, performing arts, academic clubs, and student government. For academic disengagement, we included a measure of whether the student skipped classes in the past 4 weeks. Lastly, for the presence of guns, fights, and gangs in schools, we used binary measures of students' self-report about whether: (a) they knew if students brought a gun to school, (b) the student was involved in physical fights during the past school year, and (c) there were gangs at school.

**Control variables.** We accounted for students' age and gender. We also controlled for parental education level given its relationship to children's victimization experiences (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Since Asian American adolescents with higher achievement experience higher rates of bullying (Peguero & Williams, 2011; Qin, Way, & Rana, 2008), we controlled for self-reported letter grades earned across all subjects in three categories: mostly A's, B's, or C's or below (the reference category). We also accounted for students' school level (middle or high school) and if they attended a public or private school. Lastly, we included regional indicator variables to control for time-invariant factors related to our selected outcomes but varied from region to region, as well as a set of indicators capturing effects of each survey year.

### **Data Analysis**

We used logistic regression to estimate the association between our predictors and students' victimization outcomes. We regressed each of our binary victimization outcomes on a vector of selected school predictors and controls. To interpret our results, we exponentiated each coefficient estimate on our school predictors which yielded a fitted odds ratio (*OR*). We fitted our models using the survey commands in Stata 15.1 with the subpopulation option (StataCorp, 2017) and

incorporated appropriate weights to adjust for non-response and non-coverage in the survey.

Standard errors were estimated directly using Taylor series linearization to account for the non-independence of observations due to the multi-stage clustered sampling design of the NCVS and SCS surveys. We set our significance level at .05.

**Missing data.** The disciplinary structure index had the most missingness (18%, or 233 missing observations), and both the physical and social victimization outcomes had the second highest proportion of missingness (approximately 9%, or 117 observations). To handle missing data, we used multiple imputation by chained equations (Royston & White, 2011) where we first constructed five imputed datasets, fitted our models on each imputed dataset, and then pooled the results.

## Results

Table 1 provides weighted survey descriptive statistics pooled across the six waves (biennially between 2005 and 2015). We display these statistics for our analytic subsample of Asian Americans, and for contextual reference, the full sample. As shown, Asian American adolescents most frequently experienced social victimization (15%) followed by physical victimization (4%), rates that are lower than in the overall population. Asian Americans attended schools with disciplinary structure index scores slightly below mean ( $M = -.01$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). Their perceived levels of guardianship and support at school were common. For instance, 97% and 92% of students reported having a supportive friend or adult at school, respectively. The two most prevalent security features that students reported were a sign-in requirement for school visitors (95%) and a written conduct code (94%). In terms of exposure, roughly one third of students participated in athletic teams, performing arts, and academic clubs. Roughly 4% reported that students brought guns to schools, 2% reported they were involved in fights at school, and 14% reported the presence of gangs at school. In comparison to the full sample, Asian Americans reported attending safer schools with less security monitoring.

<<insert Table 1 here>>

In Table 2, we display logistic regression results separately by physical and social victimization. Below, we present and interpret our results that have been adjusted for controls.

<<insert Table 2 here>>

### **Physical Victimization**

School disciplinary structure had no bearing on the physical victimization of Asian American adolescents (odds ratio [ $OR$ ] = 0.65;  $p = .051$ ). Though the effect was in the direction we hypothesized—students in schools with higher scores on the disciplinary structure index were predicted to have lower odds of physical victimization—it was not statistically significant at conventional levels of significance. Though disciplinary structure was unrelated to physical victimization, one aspect of support and guardianship mattered: peer support. Having a supportive peer related to a lower odds of physical victimization by roughly 84% ( $OR = 0.16$ ;  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, having a supportive adult was not influential. Notably, no school security measures were significantly related to physical victimization.

Among the school exposure predictors, participation in school sponsored athletic teams was the only extracurricular activity linked to physical victimization. For Asian American adolescents who reported that they participated in athletic teams, their odds of physical victimization were approximately 3.6 times higher ( $OR = 3.55$ ;  $p < .001$ ) versus their peers who did not participate in athletics. In addition to athletic participation, adolescents who engaged in physical fights experienced an odds of physical victimization that was nearly 20 times higher ( $OR = 19.81$ ;  $p < .001$ ) versus their peers who did not engage in physical fights.

### **Social Victimization**

Similar to our results for physical victimization, we found no association between disciplinary structure and social victimization ( $OR = 0.81$ ;  $p = .12$ ). We did not detect significant effects of any



predictors capturing school guardianship, including social support (having a supportive adult or peer) or school security and safety features. Although we found that disciplinary structure and guardianship were unrelated to social victimization for Asian American youth, three exposure-related factors were linked to higher odds of being socially victimized: knowledge that other students brought guns to schools ( $OR = 3.24; p < .05$ ); involvement in physical fights ( $OR = 4.97; p < .01$ ); and gang presence in schools ( $OR = 2.90; p < .001$ ).

### **Discussion**

While schools play a critical role in influencing the victimization experience of adolescents (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira, & Vinokur, 2002; Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016; Eliot et al., 2010; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005), we have limited knowledge of how schools shape the victimization experiences of Asian American students, a group often overlooked in the mainstream bullying and victimization literature. In contrast to previous research on Asian American victimization that draws from one year of data (e.g, Koo, Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2012; Pegeuro, 2008), this present study leveraged data from the six recent rounds (2005 to 2015) of the School Crime Supplement (SCS) of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to investigate whether schools—their disciplinary structure, their guardianship role, and the opportunities for exposure to victimization they provide— influenced the probability of either physical or social victimization of Asian American adolescents.

A main contribution of this study is the application of two interconnected theories on victimization to Asian American adolescents, a population often either overlooked or not sampled in previous research. Each theory allowed us to assess hypotheses about the effect of different school characteristics on the victimization of Asian American adolescents and, by doing so, we identified influential school characteristics linked to victimization. In addition, while other studies of Asian American victimization have examined school support and exposure separately, this study

explored both together to assess their relative influence. To summarize, our results suggest that Asian American victimization is more consistent with opportunity theory where exposure to certain activities and social support play a larger role than authoritative discipline structures in the form of rules and safety structures. These results have implications for how schools invest resources to address Asian American victimization. We discuss more specific findings and implications below.

While we found that the disciplinary structure of schools did not influence the victimization of Asian American youth, our evidence demonstrates that peer support can provide a buffer for victimization. This finding is reflected in the broader literature on supportive peers and adolescent victimization (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Schmidt & Bagwell, 2007). For Asian American youth, however, we found that this buffering effect holds true only for physical rather than social victimization. This contrasts with the hypothesis that peers can more effectively prevent social exclusion versus physical victimization because addressing incidents of social exclusion does not require a student's friend to be involved in direct confrontations with the aggressor (Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand, & Amatya, 1999). At the same time, given that social victimization is more prevalent among Asian Americans than physical victimization (Cooc & Gee, 2014), peer support alone may be insufficient to protect Asian Americans. Also, the strength and quality of Asian Americans' friendships may partially explain why peer support did not reduce social victimization. Prior studies on low-income Asian American adolescents shows that Asian American boys tend to have friendships characterized by low levels of companionship, alliance and satisfaction (Way, Cowal, Gingold, Pahl, & Bissessar, 2001). Asian American girls also reported lower levels of friendship support relative to their Black or Latino counterparts (Way, Gingold, Rotenberg, & Kuriakose, 2005). As a result, Asian American adolescents with more detached peer relationships and lower levels of support may experience

lower levels of friendship reciprocity (Vaquera & Kao, 2008). Consequently, their peers may be less inclined to help them cope with social victimization.

In contrast to peer support which had a protective effect, adult support was unrelated to victimization. The closeness and strength of the relationship with adults may have mattered. Indeed, evidence shows that teachers are less likely to have close relationships with Asian American elementary students relative to their Black, Latino and White counterparts (Yiu, 2013). Relatedly, evidence from a nationally representative sample of high school students demonstrates that English teachers had weaker social relationships with Asian Americans versus Whites (Cherng, 2017). Future studies should investigate whether and how the strength and quality of Asian American adolescents' adult relationships influences victimization.

As for other aspects of guardianship and support, we found that school security features (e.g., security guards, metal detectors, etc.) were unrelated to Asian American's social or physical victimization experiences. Our finding corroborates the empirical literature on school-based victimization involving adolescents more broadly which finds no association between school security measures and victimization (Popp, 2012). In fact, analyses by Schreck and Miller (2003) using the School Safety and Discipline Component of the 1993 National Household Education Survey found that school security measures can function as a form of "incivility" and enhanced the likelihood of student worries about crime. Further, schools in communities that experience higher levels of overall violence may also rely on school security measures more and as a result, such measures may not necessarily have a positive influence on victimization rates.

Consistent with opportunity theory, a set of exposure-related factors was related to higher odds of victimization. We found that Asian American adolescents who participated in athletic teams experienced higher odds of physical victimization. In contrast to Peguero and Williams's (2011) finding for Asian American youth that demonstrated an effect of athletic participation on bullying

victimization overall (e.g., picked on, received threats of harm or was hit), we find an effect specific to physical victimization (e.g., pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on). As Popp (2012) suggests, participation in extracurricular activities can enhance opportunities for adolescents to engage with potential peer victimizers. Further, as Peguero and Williams (2011) noted, victimization for those participating in sports may represent a type of backlash against those who do not conform to stereotypes, with Asian Americans stereotypically viewed by their peers as less athletically inclined.

Finally, students who reported that they engaged in physical fights had higher odds of both physical and social victimization while students who were exposed to gangs experienced a higher odds of social victimization. These trends are similar to findings in the broader population of adolescents (Popp, 2012). For example, using data from the 2007 wave of the SCS, Popp (2012) found that for students who had been in fights, relative to students who did not engage in fights, their odds of physical bullying victimization was nearly 5 times higher and their odds of social bullying victimization was 3 times higher. Our estimates are much larger in magnitude, which may reflect differences in the factors that protect adolescents as whole versus Asian Americans from physical victimization. For example, according to Popp (2012), the presence of guardianship (fairness of school rules) and higher academic achievement lowered adolescents' odds of physical bullying. The presence of these protective factors, especially for those who engaged in fights, may have partially offset the harmful consequences of engaging in fights. In contrast, for Asian Americans adolescents in our study, only peer support protected them from physical victimization. Whereas academic achievement may have attenuated the effects of engaging in fights for the overall population in Popp's study, this was not the case for Asian Americans as grades were not related to victimization in our study. Thus, in the absence of other protective factors that partially offset the negative effects of physical fights, Asian American adolescents may have borne a much larger negative brunt of engaging in physical fights.

Finally, similar to our findings, Popp (2012) also found that for adolescents overall, their odds of social victimization were 1.28 times higher if they had gangs at school. Qualitative research by Forber-Pratt, Aragon, and Espelage (2014) involving 10 adolescents in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades from a middle school in the Midwest suggests that fear can pervade the school in the presence of gangs, thereby enhancing the likelihood of students feeling trapped and helpless; further, gang presence can escalate the violent nature of attacks on students (Forber-Pratt et al., 2014).

### **Implications for Practice**

Our findings underscore the need for schools to consider strategies beyond commonplace school disciplinary structures and security measures to mitigate victimization for Asian American adolescents. Well-known antibullying interventions, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) and the KiVa Antibullying Program (for a review, see Ansary, Elias, Greene & Green, 2015) hold considerable promise. These programs often promote building social support in school (Boulton et al., 1999) as students can draw upon such support as a coping strategy or buffer against victimization (Kilpatrick Demaray & Kerres Malecki, 2006). Though promising, the social support components underlying anti-bullying interventions are not only implicitly defined (Kilpatrick Demaray & Kerres Malecki, 2006), but often applied to whole schools irrespective of students' racial and ethnic identities and experiences. Further, research on the OBPP showed that White adolescents were the only group to experience reductions in victimization (Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007).

Given these limitations of whole-school social support interventions, we should critically consider how anti-victimization strategies based on a whole-school approach need to be adapted to the racial and ethnic realities of schools, particularly schools with growing populations of Asian American students. In tailoring whole-school interventions, schools—particularly, their administrators and teachers—must first self-examine their own attitudes, both explicit and implicit,

towards the victimization of Asian American youth. Evidence clearly demonstrates that schools, including staff, teachers and administrators often turn a blind eye towards Asian American victimization (U.S. Department of Education et al., 2016). This indifference may underlie our finding that adult support was unrelated to reducing victimization. Moreover, this indifference echoes a U.S. Department of Justice investigation of targeted physical violence against Asian American youth in South Philadelphia High School in 2009. The investigation found that the school district was "...deliberately indifferent to known instances of severe and pervasive student-on-student harassment of Asian students..." (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 2010). In sum, if schools adopt multi-tiered, holistic anti-victimization interventions, they must self-assess whether and how the school itself might be indifferent and thereby complicit in reinforcing and further legitimizing victimization against Asian Americans.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Three limitations are important to note. Since there are omitted factors we cannot observe or control for, our study provides correlational rather than causal evidence. For instance, adolescents reporting peer support may also have higher levels of peer acceptance and perceived popularity; though acceptance and popularity are linked to a lower likelihood of victimization (de Bruyn, Cillessen, & Wissink, 2009), they remain unobserved in our analyses. Second, we used self-reported victimization outcomes that are susceptible to bias (Bovaird, 2010) due to systematic over- or under-reporting. Finally, many of the measures we use come from responses to single survey questions capturing only the presence or absence of a particular factor. Future research should measure the degree to which these features exist. Despite these limitations, the relationships documented throughout our analyses generate a more comprehensive understanding of how schools influence Asian Americans' victimization experiences.

Future research on how schools shape the victimization experiences of Asian American youth should consider several new areas. First, disaggregating victimization experiences by Asian American ethnic subgroups would allow researchers to capture important intra-ethnic variation in victimization, adding depth and nuance to future studies. Maffini's (2016) recent study of the perceptions of school safety among Southeast Asians offers a compelling example of research in this vein. Researchers should also consider examining whether and how schools affect Asian American youth differently based on their complex intersectional identities, including their gender, class and immigration status, all which strongly predict victimization (Koo et al., 2012; Peguero, 2008; Qin et al., 2008). Since our study can only assess correlational relationships between schools and victimization, researchers should consider using quasi-experimental designs that leverage district- or state-variation in school policies around school-level factors to help identify causal effects. Finally, qualitative methods can help unpack the mechanisms for why particular school factors are influential while others are not; this would lend critical voice and perspectives to complement our quantitative findings.

Our work provides important descriptive evidence on the associations between schools and the victimization of Asian American adolescents. The evidence, coupled with seminal work by Peguero and Williams (2011) and Peguero et al. (2015), brings into sharper focus the plight of Asian American youth, raising critical awareness towards their victimization experiences. Importantly, continued research on Asian American victimization and schools can help overcome long standing blind spots throughout our education system towards the victimization of Asian American youth.

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Table 1

*Weighted Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Asian American			
	Subsample ( <i>n</i> = 1,303)		Full Sample ( <i>n</i> = 24,798)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Victimization outcomes				
Physical victimization	0.04	(0.19)	0.09	(0.28)
Social victimization	0.15	(0.36)	0.25	(0.43)
Disciplinary structure				
Experience of School Rules index	-0.01	(1.01)	-0.10	(1.10)
Support and guardianship				
Supportive friend at school	0.97	(0.16)	0.97	(0.17)
Supportive adult at school	0.91	(0.29)	0.93	(0.25)
Security guards or assigned police officers	0.76	(0.43)	0.69	(0.46)
School staff or adults supervising the hallway	0.91	(0.29)	0.91	(0.29)
Metal detectors, including wands	0.09	(0.29)	0.11	(0.31)
Locked entrance or exit doors	0.62	(0.49)	0.64	(0.48)
Visitor sign in required	0.95	(0.22)	0.95	(0.22)
Locker checks	0.43	(0.50)	0.54	(0.50)
Students required to wear identification	0.29	(0.46)	0.25	(0.43)
One or more security cameras	0.63	(0.48)	0.70	(0.46)
Student code of conduct	0.94	(0.24)	0.96	(0.19)
Exposure				
Extracurricular involvement				
Athletics	0.30	(0.46)	0.40	(0.49)
Performing arts	0.28	(0.45)	0.28	(0.45)
Academic clubs	0.36	(0.48)	0.21	(0.41)
Student government	0.07	(0.26)	0.07	(0.25)
Skipped class (past 4 weeks)	0.05	(0.22)	0.06	(0.24)
Students brought guns to school	0.04	(0.19)	0.05	(0.21)
Involved in physical fights at school	0.02	(0.14)	0.05	(0.22)
Gangs at school	0.15	(0.36)	0.20	(0.40)
Controls				
Age (in years)	14.82	(1.84)	14.86	(1.88)
Male	0.54	(0.50)	0.51	(0.50)
Parental education level				
Elementary (5th grade or below)	0.05	(0.21)	0.02	(0.13)

Middle (6th through 8th grades)	0.03	(0.17)	0.04	(0.19)
Some high school or high school graduate	0.33	(0.47)	0.37	(0.48)
Self-reported grades				
A's	0.60	(0.49)	0.38	(0.48)
B's	0.32	(0.47)	0.43	(0.50)
C's or below	0.09	(0.28)	0.19	(0.39)
Attends a public school	0.93	(0.26)	0.92	(0.27)
In middle school (grades 6-8)	0.38	(0.49)	0.39	(0.49)
Regions				
Northeast	0.25	(0.43)	0.17	(0.38)
Midwest	0.14	(0.35)	0.25	(0.43)
South	0.22	(0.41)	0.36	(0.48)
West	0.39	(0.49)	0.22	(0.42)

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Table 2

*Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Odds of Physical and Social Victimization of Asian American Adolescents*

	Physical Victimization				Social Victimization			
	<i>OR</i> (unadjusted)	<i>SE</i>	<i>OR</i> (adjusted)	<i>SE</i>	<i>OR</i> (unadjusted)	<i>SE</i>	<i>OR</i> (adjusted)	<i>SE</i>
Disciplinary structure								
Experience of School Rules index	0.67	(0.13)	0.65	(0.14)	0.81	(0.11)	0.81	(0.11)
Support and guardianship								
Supportive friend at school	0.31	(0.28)	0.16*	(0.14)	0.41	(0.25)	0.40	(0.24)
Supportive adult at school	1.89	(1.30)	3.20	(2.29)	1.43	(0.67)	1.53	(0.73)
Security guards or assigned police officers	0.68	(0.27)	0.96	(0.40)	0.95	(0.22)	1.10	(0.28)
School staff or adults supervising the hallway	0.77	(0.46)	0.85	(0.50)	0.82	(0.28)	0.88	(0.31)
Metal detectors, including wands	0.55	(0.39)	0.71	(0.51)	0.85	(0.31)	0.90	(0.33)
Locked entrance or exit doors	0.92	(0.34)	0.68	(0.26)	1.18	(0.24)	1.12	(0.23)
Visitor sign in required	0.86	(0.57)	0.80	(0.55)	0.71	(0.33)	0.66	(0.29)
Locker checks	0.70	(0.25)	0.63	(0.26)	1.19	(0.25)	1.18	(0.25)
Students required to wear identification	0.91	(0.34)	0.81	(0.30)	0.89	(0.19)	0.95	(0.21)
One or more security cameras	1.10	(0.45)	1.01	(0.41)	1.15	(0.25)	1.27	(0.31)
Student code of conduct	4.27	(5.34)	4.63	(5.62)	1.03	(0.37)	1.07	(0.39)
Exposure								
Extracurricular involvement								
Athletics	3.03***	(0.97)	3.55***	(1.15)	1.18	(0.29)	1.29	(0.33)
Performing arts	1.16	(0.47)	0.95	(0.45)	1.68*	(0.33)	1.49	(0.32)
Academic clubs	0.71	(0.31)	1.31	(0.59)	0.87	(0.18)	1.14	(0.25)
Student government	1.38	(0.90)	1.86	(1.24)	0.81	(0.34)	0.88	(0.36)



Skipped class (past 4 weeks)	0.83	(0.66)	1.28	(0.85)	2.15	(0.92)	2.36	(1.06)
Students brought guns to school	1.44	(1.28)	1.38	(1.06)	3.27*	(1.74)	3.24*	(1.81)
Involved in physical fights at school	18.97***	(12.60)	19.81***	(11.97)	5.97***	(3.07)	4.97**	(2.42)
Gangs at school	2.52	(1.20)	2.53	(1.25)	2.84***	(0.65)	2.90***	(0.67)
Controls								
Age (in years)			0.53**	(0.11)			0.92	(0.08)
Male			1.35	(0.51)			0.86	(0.18)
Parental education level (ref: Some college or above)								
Elementary (5th grade or below)			2.65	(1.75)			1.43	(0.50)
Middle (6th through 8th grades)			0.53	(0.70)			0.53	(0.33)
Some high school or high school graduate			1.59	(0.58)			0.90	(0.18)
Self-reported grades (ref: C's or below)								
A's			1.39	(2.19)			1.37	(1.65)
B's			3.08	(4.98)			2.00	(2.53)
Attends a public school								
In middle school (grades 6-8)			1.49	(1.22)			1.31	(0.54)
In middle school (grades 6-8)								
			0.52	(0.36)			1.61	(0.41)
Regions (ref: West)								
Northeast			0.30	(0.24)			0.74	(0.20)
Midwest			2.10	(0.88)			0.94	(0.26)
South			1.42	(0.76)			0.98	(0.25)
<i>n</i> (unweighted)	1,303		1,303		1,303		1,303	

*Note.* OR = odds ratio. Models based on five imputed datasets where missing data were estimated using chained equations. Models also incorporate survey weights and include fixed effects for survey year. Standard errors (*SE*) were estimated directly using Taylor series linearization. Goodness-of-fit tests from a set of preliminary adjusted models on non-imputed data showed that each model fit the data (model predicting physical victimization: Hosmer-Lemeshow Chi-squared = 4.46;  $p = .81$  and model predicting social victimization: Hosmer-Lemeshow Chi-squared = 9.57;  $p = .30$ ).

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$