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# **Parental Perceptions of School Climate and Adolescent Mental Health Among Chinese American Families**

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Presentor: Yijing Zhang, University of Maryland, College Park

Authors: Yijing Zhang, Jin Hyung Lim, Chunyan Yang, Ph.D.



## Background

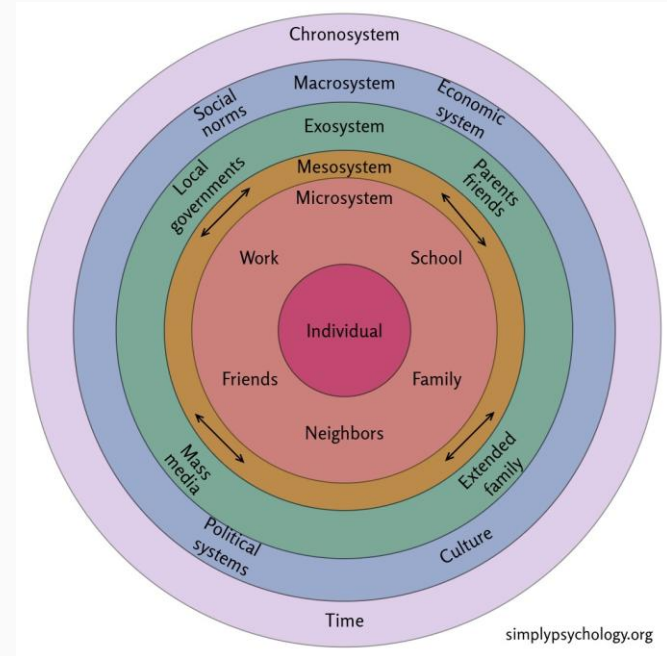
- Adolescents' perception of school climate affects mental health (Suldo et al., 2012).
- Parents influence adolescents' well-being through their own perceptions (Kocayoruk, 2012).
- Gap: Limited research on parents' perceptions of school climate and their influence on child mental health in Chinese American families



# Theoretical framework

## Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

- Child development is shaped by multiple environmental systems
- Parents and schools are part of the **microsystem**
- Interactions between family and school form the **mesosystem**
- Parental perceptions of school climate influence children's adjustment
- Culturally responsive school environments may buffer stress
- Highlights importance of **contextual and cultural factors**





# Theoretical framework

**Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) views the family as a complex system of interconnected and interdependent individuals.**

Assumptions: The family is a complex emotional unit, emotionally interconnected; Familial, community, and social relationships are reciprocal

- Families function as interconnected emotional systems
- Stress or concern in one member affects the whole family unit
- Parental worries about school climate can influence child mental health
- explaining emotional transmission from parent to child
- Supports analyzing how family dynamics mediate school-related stress



## Significance of the Study

- Chinese American adolescents face unique cultural and academic stressors (Zhou et al., 2023), which may be attributed to the strong emphasis on academic achievement within their families and educational systems (Stankov, 2013).
- Understanding parents' views can help shape educational and mental health supports.
- Goal: Examine how Chinese American parental perceptions of school climate relate to perceived adolescent anxiety and depression.

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# Research purpose

- Explore associations between parents' perceptions of school climate and their assessment of their children's mental health.
- Identify which school climate factors are most impactful.





# Methods

- Sample: 209 Chinese American parents (76.59% female, U.S., 2020 during COVID)
- Measures:
  - **School climate scale** (Bear et al., 2011): teacher-student relations, student-student relations, clarity of expectations, school safety, fairness of rules, teacher-home communication (Parents reported)
  - **Youth internalizing problems screener** (Renshaw & Cook, 2011): parent-reported anxiety and depression (Parents reported)
  - Covariates: Adolescent age
  - Analytic approach: Multiple regression analyses





## Results

Result of multiple regression analyses between parents' perception of school climate and anxiety

Independent Variable	Standardized Beta	Std. Error	t value	p value
(Intercept)	-0.019	0.064	-0.300	0.764
Teacher-student	0.154	0.092	1.678	0.095
Student-student	-0.292	0.114	-2.557	0.011*
Clarity	0.086	0.092	0.931	0.353
Fairness	-0.204	0.104	-1.962	0.051
Safety	0.465	0.121	3.834	0.000***
T1 A Age	0.112	0.084	1.339	0.182

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*  $p < .05$



# Results

Result of multiple regression analyses between parents' perception of school climate and depression

Independent Variable	Standardized Beta	Std. Error	t value	p value
(Intercept)	-0.015	0.068	-0.215	0.830
Teacher-student	0.100	0.098	1.022	0.308
Student-student	-0.229	0.122	-1.884	0.061
Clarity	0.089	0.098	0.905	0.367
Fairness	-0.130	0.111	-1.168	0.244
Safety	0.308	0.129	2.381	0.018*
T1_A_Age	0.180	0.089	2.022	0.044

\*  $p < .05$



## Findings

1. Parents perception of student-student relations **negatively** associated with adolescent anxiety (significant) and depression(marginally significant)
2. Perception of school safety **positively** associated with mental health problems (non-causal)
  - *Parents' hypervigilance (overprotectiveness and transmission of anxiety)*
  - *Physical safety (security) vs psychological safety (peer relationships), rigid discipline policy →anxiety*
  - *Parents' coping mechanism for children's pre-anxiety/depression*



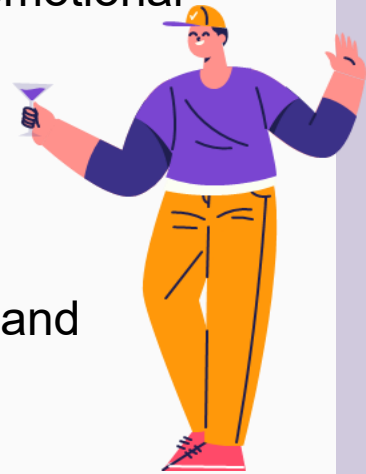
# Findings

3. Teacher-student relationship is **not** significant with mental health problems

- *Teacher-student relationship might become less important for adolescents when they are getting older, peer relationships matter more to them*

# Implications

- School mental health interventions among adolescents should foster positive peer environments; and should aim not only to create **physically secure** environments but also foster a sense of emotional and **psychological safety** among students.
- When addressing adolescents mental health, mental health professionals should address **parental overprotectiveness** and anxiety transmission in family-based interventions.





# Limitations and Future directions

## **Multi-informant designs**

→ Incorporate reports from parents, teachers, and adolescents to compare perceptions and mental health assessments.

## **Family-based emotional dynamics**

→ Examine **how parental anxiety or concern about safety transmits to their children**, contributing to their internalizing symptoms.

## **Longitudinal studies**

→ Investigate **causal directionality**:

Is it the child's symptoms shaping parents' safety perceptions, or vice versa?



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# Thank you

## Q&A