

Research suggests hate speech experiences drop when schools offer structure and adult support

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Asian Americans have been the targets of hate speech for generations, particularly during the COVID pandemic. But new research by the University of California, Davis, suggests that Asian American

adolescents experience fewer incidents of hate speech in schools with stronger disciplinary structures and adult support.

A new study looks at [hate speech](#) experiences even before COVID, during the period between 2015 and 2019. The [article](#), "Hate Speech Against Asian American Youth: Pre-Pandemic Trends and The Role of School Factors," was published May 4 in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

"Although hate against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities is longstanding and systemic, a strong confluence of recent events—the pandemic, coupled with social and political rifts—has intensified this hate," said lead author Kevin Gee, a professor in the UC Davis School of Education who specializes in school organization and [educational policy](#).

Gee and his co-authors sought to look at how school environments might perpetuate, or in the alternative, offer protection from hate speech.

"This study found that stronger authoritative climates alongside supportive adults in schools are linked to lower probability that Asian American adolescents experience hate speech at school," Gee said. He said the research also showed that adolescents who report engaging in fights were more likely to experience hate speech and social victimization in general.

Gee said that schools can help reduce hate speech through more positive school climates, in particular. "Authoritative school climate and exposure to fights are malleable and can be shaped directly by broader school climate-related policies, programs and interventions," he said. "School climate has potential to protect Asian American youth from hate speech at school."

Researchers analyzed data collected from 938 Asian American adolescents from 2015, 2017 and 2019 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey. On average, about 7% of Asian Americans were targets of hate speech at school between 2015 and 2019. Rates went down for students who experienced "strict, yet fair" disciplinary rules when coupled with strong adult support.

Delving deeper into the numbers, about 1 in 15 Asian American adolescents reported being victims of hate speech during the study period, with 1 in 5 reporting hate speech in school environments with the least disciplinary structure. Those schooled in the most disciplinary structured environments experienced hate speech at a level of 1 in 20, according to the research.

For students who engaged in fights, their predicted probability of encountering hate speech is roughly 30%, compared to 12% for counterparts who did not engage in fights.

Co-authors of the study include North Cooc, associate professor at University of Texas, Austin; and Peter Yu, an undergraduate researcher at UC Davis.

More information: Kevin A. Gee et al, Hate Speech Against Asian American Youth: Pre-Pandemic Trends and The Role of School Factors, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (2024). [DOI: 10.1007/s10964-024-01987-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-024-01987-8)

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