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# School violence in China: A multi-level analysis of student victimization in rural middle schools

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**Purpose:** The aim of the study is to investigate the prevalence of physical victimization in rural Chinese middle schools as well as the individual, teacher/classroom, and school level risk factors associated with experiencing physical victimization.

**Design:** We use two waves of longitudinal, representative survey data to perform a multi-level logistic regression analysis of physical victimization among middle school students from 100 villages in one of China's poorest provinces. We focus on a subset of questionnaire items that were gathered from students when the sampled children were 13-16 years old. We also utilize student data from the first wave of the survey to control for prior internalizing problems and academic achievement. Finally, we link matched data collected from principal and teacher questionnaires to examine the risk factors for physical victimization associated with students' microclimates and the wider school environment.

**Findings:** A substantial proportion of middle school students (40%) reported having been beaten by classmates. Elevated risk was found among males; students with prior poor performance in language; students with past internalizing problems; students of female teachers and teachers evaluated as low performing; students in disruptive classrooms; and students in classrooms undergoing mandated reforms.

**Implications:** These findings suggest that efforts to reduce school violence should not focus on the deficits of individual students, but rather should target practices to alter the within school risk factors associated with micro-climates.

## Keywords

violence, schools, bullying, china

## Disciplines

Asian Studies | Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences | Sociology

## Comments

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## **Introduction**

School violence has received a great deal of attention in countries around the world (Smith & Brain, 2000; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). In many nations, media accounts of high-profile acts of physical and psychological aggression at school have thrust the issues of school social climate and student victimization onto the national stage, and have prompted the creation of school programs and policies intended to prevent acts of violence (Guardian, 5/2/2009; Reuters, 11/21/2008; Boston Globe, 1/24/2010; Sydney Morning Herald 2/17/2010). At the same time, a growing body of research has sought to understand the prevalence of student victimization as well as the factors that contribute to victimization at school (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011; Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, & Goesling, 2002; Wong, Lok, Lo, & Ma, 2008; Mellor, 1990; Rigby, 1997). Strikingly, one cross-national examination of student victimization found that school violence was endemic in each of the 37 countries studied (Akiba et al, 2002). This research, using data from the Third International Mathematics and Science Survey, found that 1 in every 3 to 4 students considered themselves to be a victim or potential victim of violence at school at least once a month across the 37 countries. An international review of a particular form of victimization—bullying—argued that bullying is sufficiently widespread around the world to be termed “normative” (Smith & Brain, 2000: 2). Notably, Smith and Brain’s (2000) review emphasized that forms of victimization at school present with strong similarities across seemingly diverse educational systems such as the United States, Norway, Israel, Japan, Turkey, and New Zealand.

Much of the research devoted to the risk factors associated with experiencing violence at school has emphasized individual-level risk factors such as gender, socioeconomic background,

and psychological adjustment (Smith, Shu, & Madsen, 2001; Akiba et al., 2002; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Due et al., 2009). More recent studies of school violence have adopted a social ecological perspective by investigating whether characteristics of the wider school and community contexts promote or hinder students' risk of experiencing violence at school (Cook, Williams, Guerra, & Kim, 2010; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005, Due et al., 2009; Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Although some research has identified significant links between school violence and contextual factors such as school and neighborhood economic resources, social composition, and school climate, findings have been inconsistent. In addition, little work has focused on what could be termed micro-contexts or microclimates within schools--such as the day-to-day dimensions of the classroom environment and the characteristics of teachers. Contextual factors may be a particularly important dimension of students' risk for school violence in East Asian educational settings because of a cultural emphasis on group membership. Moreover, despite some evidence to suggest that school violence may be more prevalent in developing countries than in more industrialized ones (Akiba, 2002), few studies examine victimization in low and middle income country settings.

This paper utilizes a social ecological framework to organize analyses of individual, classroom and school risk factors for victimization, using the case of middle school students in poor rural communities in China. The research design and variable selection are guided by risk factors that are well-established in the theoretical and empirical literatures—literatures primarily focused on developed countries. However, we also consider how violence at school and potential risk factors for violence might be linked to features of the Chinese educational system and the setting of poor rural communities in China. For example, academic performance is high stakes and generally public knowledge in Chinese classrooms. To the extent that poor

performance is stigmatized, prior performance may be linked to victimization (Wei, Jonson-Reid, & Tsao, 2007). School and classroom climates may also be particularly important in this setting. Children in China spend a great deal of time in school, due to long school days and long academic years. They know teachers and their own classmates very well. China's "homeroom" teacher system in which, normatively, one teacher takes primary responsibility for shepherding a defined class of students throughout their time at the school, means that this teacher and class peers are likely to be particularly salient to students' experiences. This situation might mean that contextual dimensions of schools, classrooms, and teachers could be more directly linked to victimization in East Asian school settings where there is traditionally a stronger class identity and students have more limited interactions with other students outside of their class grouping than in other settings (Wei, et al, 2007; Tom, Schwartz, Chang, Farver, & Xu, 2010; Wong, 2008).

In addition, distinctive characteristics of China's educational system provide an unusual opportunity to study whether teacher quality and the implementation of reforms altering classroom practice matter for victimization in the classroom. For example, China's well-established system of teacher evaluation and rankings, which depend on multiple inputs such as peer evaluation, professional development activities, and student outcomes, presents an unusually strong indicator of teacher quality. Additionally, the phased-in implementation of the so-called "New Curriculum", a major nation-wide educational reform intended to dramatically transform teaching practices, allows us to examine differences in school violence between classrooms where the teachers' attention may be primarily focused on the challenges of implementing a new reform and classrooms where teachers are not engaged in reform.

Finally, we anticipate that the highly impoverished setting of this study, while not representative of China, may be illustrative of settings where children are at higher than average risk of victimization. Children in poor rural communities experience more day-to-day deprivations and stressors than other children (for example, see Hannum & Adams, 2008; Davidson & Adams, 2013), and they attend schools with fewer resources to devote to the academic and behavioral development of children. Taken together, these circumstances may translate to more behavioral problems in the classroom and to greater risk of peer victimization.

In this paper, we investigate physical victimization, which indicates whether a student reports having been beaten “sometimes” or “often” by classmates. Our analyses address four specific research questions: 1) How prevalent is physical victimization in rural middle schools in Gansu Province? 2) Do the individual risk factors typically associated with student victimization in more developed settings, such as low socio-economic status, being male, and psychological vulnerability, predict the likelihood of experiencing school violence in this setting? 3) Do students who have teachers with specific characteristics have less risk for experiencing physical victimization at school? And finally, 4) are characteristics of students’ microclimates and wider school environments associated with experiencing physical victimization?

After presenting the social ecological theory framework and our hypotheses, introducing the study context, and presenting our data and methods, we perform a multi-level logistic regression analysis of physical victimization among middle school students from 100 villages in one of China’s poorest provinces. Finally, we link matched data collected from principal and teacher questionnaires to examine the risk factors for physical victimization associated with students’ classroom microclimates and the wider school environment. We capitalize on the

longitudinal design of the survey to adjust for prior internalizing problems and academic achievement. We interpret main results with reference to retrospective qualitative interviews about school experiences conducted five years later with 40 of the original sample children, in two sample communities.

## **Framework and hypotheses**

### *Conceptualizing student victimization*

School violence can be defined broadly, to include threats, intimidation, snatching of belongings, and physical and sexual aggression. In this broad definition, victims and perpetrators could be students or school personnel. Most researchers embrace a well-known conceptual definition of school violence (Olweus, 1996) as physical or psychological aggression perpetuated repeatedly with the intent of doing harm. However, the measurement strategies utilized to operationalize school violence in empirical studies of prevalence, determinants, and consequences are less consistent. For example, investigations of student victimization by classmates have employed measures ranging from physical victimization, to direct and indirect verbal victimization, to sexual victimization, to social exclusion, to general bullying (Akiba, 2010, Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011; Veenstra, Lindenberg, & Oldehinkel, 2005). Some studies have constructed a composite score or scale index to capture student experiences with multiple forms of victimization (Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011; Demaray & Malecki, 2003, Mercer, McMillen, & DeRosier, 2009), while others utilized single-item variables to focus on the factors that place students at risk for particular forms of victimization (Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Currie, Gabhainn, Godeau, Roberts, & Smith, 2008; Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brien, 2009). In this paper, we adopt a simple and clear measure of peer-peer physical violence: physical victimization, which indicates whether a student reports having been beaten “sometimes” or “often” by classmates. Unlike composite measures in which the same value can be obtained by a number of different



forms of school violence, the single item measure that we use can be interpreted consistently for all students.

### *Conceptualizing risk factors: The social ecological framework*

We draw on key components of social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to examine the individual and contextual risks factors associated with school violence. This nested ecological model regards human behavior as interactions between individual characteristics and multiple levels of social and physical contextual systems (i.e, the micro-, meso-,exo-, macro-, and chrono levels of systems). In this paper, we utilize the social ecological model as an organizing framework for both our review of research literature exploring school violence and our conceptualization of our analyses.

### Individual risk factors for student victimization

Previous research in developed countries has focused on the individual risk factors associated with victimization at school. Some research has highlighted gender differences in students' experiences of school violence, with male students being victimized more frequently than female students (Guerra et al, 2011; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Furlong, Morrison, Chung, & Bates, 1998; Boulton & Underwood, 1992). For example, a national study of victimization among students in grades six through ten in the United States demonstrated that approximately 26 percent of boys and 14 percent of girls reported frequently experiencing bullying (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Gender-based beliefs and expectations for children's behavior may give rise to differential reactions among peers; perpetrators may be more likely to react with physical aggression towards male students. Research also revealed that the gender gap in school violence is even more pronounced for more violent types of victimization (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Furlong et al, 1998). Female students are more likely to be victimized by more indirect forms of aggression, while male students are more likely to

experience direct physical aggression such as hitting or kicking (Olweus, 1993; Nansel et al, 2001; Olweus, 1999; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Furlong et al, 1998). In a study of school violence among Israeli secondary school students, more than twice as many boys needed to seek medical attention because they were injured and approximately three times as many boys were cut with a knife or other sharp object, when compared to girls (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). However, other recent studies have reported mixed or insignificant gender differences, calling into question the consistent nature of previous gender findings (Barboza et al, 2009; Goldstein, Young, & Boyd, 2008; Card et al. 2008).

Research has also linked indicators of psychological vulnerability such as student depression to increased risk for victimization, school maladjustment, and avoidance (Guerra et al, 2011; Leff 2007; Kochenderfer & Ladd 1996; for a review, see Espelage & Swearer 2003). For instance, an investigation of Australian primary school students found that the tendency to be victimized is associated with depression (Slee, 1995). A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies of the association of student victimization with psychosocial maladjustment published between 1978 and 1997 suggested that victimization was strongly related to depression (Hawker & Boulton 2000). One possible explanation for this association is suggested by studies of U.S. middle schoolers, which indicate that students with depressive tendencies are less likely to stand up for themselves (Craig, 1998) and, in turn, may be easily targeted by aggressors (Nation, Vieno, Perkins, & Santinello, 2008).

Although the findings are inconsistent, several studies show an association between low socioeconomic status and increased risk for student victimization. An examination of victimization in a sample of nearly 2000 African American, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic White urban primary school children in the United States found that the risk of being victimized varied

by indicators of socioeconomic status (Hanish & Guerra, 2000). Internationally, investigations of bullying and victimization in England and Germany (Wolke, Woods, Stanford, & Schulz, 2001) and the Netherlands (Veenstra et al, 2005) also found that students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds had an elevated risk for victimization at school. Similarly, Alikasifoglu and colleagues (2007) found that economically disadvantaged students and those with less-educated mothers were more likely to be victims of bullying in Turkey. In rural China, students from very resource-constrained families may be easily identified and targeted at school because they lack basic school supplies, school uniforms, or food for snacks. Students from low-income families may also stand out due to academic struggles because their parents are unable or unavailable to help them with their school work.

#### Contextual perspectives on school violence

Some scholars have made a case for a broader, contextual perspective that describes violence at school as an ecological phenomenon, established and perpetrated over time as a result of the complex interplay between inter- and intra-individual variables (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). Patterns of activities and interpersonal relationships experienced by the individual in the immediate context such as the classroom or the school directly affect the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, psychological research has suggested that dimensions of the school environment may serve as both stressor (Carver, Schir, & Weintraub, 1989) and protector (Kuperminc, Leadbetter, & Blatt, 2001) for students by moderating individual risk factors. In this way, the actions of peers, teachers and other adults at school, physical characteristics of the school, and even dimensions of the wider community are implicated in the development and maintenance of violence at school.

School climate, difficult to measure, has been cited widely as an important element of school quality and linked empirically to various student outcomes (Kuperminc et al, 2001;

Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997; Kasen, Cohen, & Brook, 1998; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Ream & Rumberger, 2008; Goyette & Conchas, 2002; Parcel & Dufur, 2001). School climate is a multi-faceted concept including many dimensions of the physical and social context at school such as safety, disciplinary environment, academic performance, relationships with teachers and peers, and physical infrastructure and resources (National School Climate Council, 2007). Dimensions of the school climate such as student-teacher closeness, positive disciplinary and academic environments may lower risks for peer victimization by creating social norms and institutional priorities that discourage behaviors associated with school violence. For example, in the United States, Kuperminc et al. (1997) found that more positive perceptions of school climate among middle school boys were associated with fewer aggressive or delinquent behaviors. In another study, Kasen et al. (1998) showed that a learning-focused school setting appeared to detract from subsequent school dropout and deviant behavior. Students who attended schools with poor disciplinary climates, ones accepting of aggressive and disruptive behavior, were more likely to engage in these behaviors themselves (Espelage & Swearer 2003). Research also suggests that students in highly disruptive classrooms developed less prosocial behavior and less affiliation for their peers, which may have increased the risk of being victimized (Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011). Each of these examples illustrate ways in which dimensions of school climate can sometimes promote or inhibit school violence by behavioral, learning, and relational norms. However, the association between school climate and risk for poor student behavior is complicated because the disciplinary climate itself may be shaped by both composition of the student body, such as their degree of economic deprivation, and the organizational features of the school (Arum, 2000; Barnes, Belsky, Broomfield, Melhuish, & NESS Research Team, 2006).

Beyond the school climate literature, other research links dimensions of the broader socio-economic context at school and in the surrounding neighborhood with victimization. For example, research demonstrates that school level poverty was associated with high levels of interpersonal violence and poor psycho-social adjustment (Kellam, Ling, Merisca, Brown, & Lalongo, 1998; Aber, Brown, & Jones, 2003). Importantly, the risk associated with school level poverty was independent of family level economic disadvantage (Kellam et al, 1998). Similarly, findings from a longitudinal study of more than 400 school children in England indicate that children who attended schools with higher levels of poverty were at greater risk for victimization (Dhimi, Hoglund, Leadbetter, & Boone, 2005). Further, research in the United States suggests that attending school in areas of more concentrated poverty is associated with higher rates of adolescent delinquency (Arum 2000). Interestingly, the links between contextual economic disadvantage and risk for violence persist at the national level. Using cross-national data, Akiba et al. (2002) demonstrated that at the national level, economic deprivation matters for school violence. Beyond community economic resources, research suggests that students benefit from both community social resources and community norms that support education (Adams, 2006; Connelly & Zheng, 2003; Ross and Lin, 2006). Community support for education may positively affect education by influencing student behaviors and beliefs about schooling, and in turn, students who attend schools with high levels of community support may have less risk for victimization.

### *Hypotheses*

Taken together, the research investigating victimization points to the importance of examining both the individual and contextual risk factors associated with experiencing school violence. Figure 1 depicts the student, classroom and teacher, and school level characteristics

that we hypothesize are associated with physical victimization in rural Chinese middle schools. We list our hypotheses below:

—Figure 1 about here.—

*Hypothesis 1.* Male students and psychologically vulnerable adolescents are at greater risk for experiencing physical victimization, while students who are from families with higher socioeconomic backgrounds and who have higher academic achievement are at less risk.

*Hypothesis 2.* Characteristics of classroom teachers are associated with student risk for physical victimization in two ways: First, students who have high quality teachers (based on the teacher evaluation system) and more educated teachers are at less risk for being victimized. These teachers are likely more skilled at managing the classroom environment and more aware of student behavior. Second, students who perceive their teachers as providing social support are less likely to be physically victimized because supportive teacher-student relationships may serve as an important protective factor for students (Akiba, 2010; Davidson & Adams, 2013).

*Hypothesis 3.* Students who are in classrooms with poor disciplinary climates and where teachers are in the midst of altering classroom practices to comply with new educational reforms have a greater risk of experiencing victimization.

*Hypothesis 4.* Students attending schools with greater material resources and community support are less likely to be victimized. Students in middle schools with poor academic climates are more likely to experience victimization.

### **Study context: schooling in China's rural northwest**

This study focuses on middle school students in rural areas of Gansu Province, a poor interior province in northwestern China. Gansu Province, stretching from north to south across diverse topographical features ranging from desert to grassland to jagged mountain peaks, has a population of roughly 26 million (China.org.cn 2008). Gansu is one of China's poorest

provinces, with chronic water shortages and desertification posing serious challenges to economic prosperity and family livelihoods.

Throughout the 1990s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, efforts to ensure access to schooling for children in the northwestern region were hindered by policies that decentralized school finance. Local governments were required to raise their own funds for schools. In poor, rural communities, finances were insufficient, and many public schools financed education by collecting tuition as well as multiple miscellaneous fees. During this period, access to education was conditioned by household and community level poverty (Adams & Hannum, 2005). As China entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the government responded to concerns about access problems under the decentralized system with a series of educational initiatives aimed at eliminating financial barriers to education for rural children. For example, in 2001, a “one fee system” was set up to prevent local schools from charging exorbitant fees. A phased-in implementation in Gansu province began in the poorest counties and ethnic minority areas in 2003. In communities that complied with the new fee system, local governments were expected to provide incentives for local schools to charge only “one fee” as well as commit to making up any shortfalls incurred by the change (Gansu Provincial Department of Education, 2003). By 2007, the national government not only eliminated all educational tuition and fees for compulsory education, but also pledged to provide free textbooks and subsidies for needy rural students (People’s Daily March 5, 2006).

As financial barriers to school access began to lift, the national government sponsored several initiatives focused on improving students’ experiences in the classroom as a way to raise school quality. For example, as a way to raise teaching quality in rural areas, the State provided incentives for urban college graduates and urban teachers to teach in rural schools (Yiu and

Adams, 2013). The State also launched a dramatic curriculum reform, requiring an overhaul of all curricular materials, a revision of textbooks, and investment in teacher training, to transform teaching practices and classroom environments (Sargent, 2009). As in many nations, teachers play an integral role in the State's efforts to improve educational quality. However, in rural China, teachers may carry even greater influence due to rural parents' unfamiliarity with the school system (Kong, 2008) and because Chinese teachers stay with their students for many years. In addition, although middle school teachers' primary responsibility is to ensure academic progress, transmitting knowledge and skills to students is only one of many diverse responsibilities. Teachers are expected to create a classroom environment that facilitates learning, quells disciplinary issues, and instills social norms. Teachers, particularly those who work in resource-constrained settings, are also expected to play the role of mentors or caregivers, providing guidance on a range of issues from problems at home to conflicts with friends to the correct way to study. In this way, rural teachers exert a powerful influence on classroom ecology.

Interviews with children in three rural villages in rural Gansu in 2002 suggest considerable variability in children's perceptions of their school environments (Hannum & Adams 2008). Children and mothers characterized climates in their schools and classrooms in terms that ranged from welcoming and nurturing, to competitive, strictly disciplined, and, sometimes, even violent. Sargent's (2009) classroom observations and survey results from rural Gansu suggest distinctly different patterns of student-teacher interactions across schools during the implementation period. Further, Ross and Lin (2006) discuss findings from fieldwork in schools serving different types of communities across China, and describe dramatic differences in educational philosophies and behavioral expectations for children.

## **Method**



The data source for this paper is the Gansu Survey of Children and Families (GSCF), Waves 1 and 2 (2000, 2004). The GSCF is an interdisciplinary, longitudinal study of 2,000 children ages 9 to 12 in the first wave of the survey, along with their families, teachers, principals, and communities. The overarching goal of the project is to shed light on factors that matter for the welfare of impoverished rural children, with welfare defined broadly to include educational experiences, physical health and psychological well-being, and subsequent economic outcomes. As part of later survey data collection in 2009, two villages were selected for retrospective qualitative interviews with all respondents in the original sample. Using a flexible interview procedure, students were asked to reflect on their good and bad experiences as students, and factors that helped and hindered their progress. While these interviews did not focus on the issue of school violence, violence was mentioned spontaneously by respondents in a subset of the interviews. To aid in interpreting the results from the quantitative analysis, we draw on transcripts from these interviews in our discussion.

### *Procedure*

The primary sample of children was drawn using a multi-stage approach, selecting counties, townships, villages, and then children from birth registries. Three minority autonomous counties were excluded from the sampling frame due to travel restrictions to these areas, language barriers, limited transportation, and sparse and dispersed populations in these counties. Unfortunately, the sample does not contain sufficient numbers of minority children for meaningful analysis. With this caveat, the GSCF is representative of children in rural areas of Gansu, and includes wealthier and poorer rural counties. The data was collected through questionnaires administered to the students, their families, teachers in their schools, and school principals in 2000 and 2004. This investigation focuses on a subset of questionnaire items that were gathered from students when the original sampled children were 13-16 years old (2004).

We also utilize student data from the first wave of the survey (2000) to control for prior internalizing problems and academic achievement. Next, we link matched data collected from principal and teacher questionnaires to examine the risk factors for physical victimization associated with student microclimates and the wider school environment.

### *Analytic Sample*

The analytic sample used for our analyses is comprised of 812 adolescents who were enrolled in middle school in 2004. Of the original sample of 2000 children surveyed in the first wave, 1918 participated in the second wave of data collection in 2004. Because previous research indicates that acts of aggressive behavior are highest in middle schools (Bradshaw et al, 2007; Nansel et al, 2001), we focused our analyses on middle school students by excluding students who had dropped out of school by 2004 (n=269), and adolescents who were in primary school (n=444) or senior secondary school (n=368). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all variables included in the analyses.

—Table 1 about here.—

### *Measurement*

In Table 1, we present descriptive data consisting of students' gender, socio-economic characteristics, prior psychological adjustment, and prior academic achievement. The table also describes classroom, teacher, and school contextual factors.

*Physical victimization* is based on a single item collected using student self-reports in the second wave of the survey while the students were 13-16 years-old. The students were asked whether they had ever been beaten up by classmates at school. While not a scale measure and thus not picking up the full range of perceived vulnerabilities to violence, this measure has the benefit that being beaten is a concrete occurrence, likely to be experienced, recalled and reported consistently relative to other kinds of experiences such as verbal victimization or fear of

victimization. Students answered “never,” “sometimes,” or “often.” Consistent with some previous studies investigating the prevalence of school violence, we created a dichotomous indicator to demonstrate whether the student had experienced physical victimization or not; students who answered “never” were coded as 0 (60%), while students who answered “sometimes” (37%) or “often” (3%) were coded as 1.

*Student risk factors.* Student level measures include students’ age and gender (coded 0 if female and 1 if male). In order to investigate whether students from lower socioeconomic groups are more likely to report experiencing violence at school, we included the log of family wealth and mother’s education (in years). Consistent with research examining student victimization (Leff 2007; Kochenderfer & Ladd 1996; Hawker & Boulton 2000), we consider students’ psychological adjustment by including a summative scale of students’ internalizing behavior collected four years earlier in 2000. Internalizing behavior refers to a group of behaviors characterized by over-controlled patterns such as anxiety, social withdrawal, and depression that contribute to long-term psychological adjustment difficulties. The scale was constructed from a subset of 18 items adapted from the Child Behavior Check List and the Youth Self Report (Achenbach, 1991). The scale is internally reliable in 2000 (Cronbach’s alpha=0.82) as well as in other waves of the survey (Liu, 2008). Each item was rated in a 4-point scale, as “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree.” Higher scores on the scale indicate more internalizing problems. Because stigma associated with poor academic performance may increase the likelihood of victimization in high stakes school contexts (Wei et al, 2007), we also included students’ prior mathematics and Chinese achievement from the year 2000.

*Risk factors associated with teachers and classrooms.* We consider whether students with male teachers (codes 0 if female and 1 if male), more educated teachers (coded 0 if middle or

secondary school graduates and 1 if university graduates), and higher quality teachers have less risk of being physically victimized at school. In China, teachers are evaluated each year receiving a designation as outstanding, good, pass, or fail. In our analyses, we used these ratings to create a dichotomous indicator of teacher quality coded as 1 if the teacher was ranked good or outstanding and 0 if the teacher was rated as less than good. Additionally, because previous examinations of victimization suggest that a supportive relationship between student and teacher may protect students from victimization (Akiba, 2010), we used student perceptions of their teacher to create an individual level teacher support scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.72$ ) for each student. We constructed the scale by summing student responses to seven items regarding students' perception of whether their teacher cares about students, likes them, pays attention to them, and treats them fairly, dividing by the number of items.

We also investigate two important dimensions of the classroom context: the disciplinary climate and whether teaching practices in the classroom are undergoing reform. In our analysis, we used student reports to create a poor classroom climate scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.85$ ). The individual level scale was constructed by summing student responses to 11 items regarding students' perceptions of behavior in the classroom, such as cheating, stealing, skipping school, and disrupting class and then dividing by the number of items. For each of the questions, the each student indicated how often the behavior occurred in the classroom. We also included a variable that indicates whether the classroom was undergoing change in the way the teacher managed classroom activities and evaluated students to comply with recent educational reform. Teachers were asked whether they had changed their methods in the classroom because of requirements imposed by the New Curriculum Reform. These reforms were intended to move teachers from traditional teacher-centered and hierarchical traditional teaching style to learner-

centered, interrogative approaches. Qualitative research in classrooms where teachers were implementing these challenging reforms suggest that the new student-centered, hands-on approach, itself, may often resulted in a more relaxed environment and may have made it harder for teachers to maintain classroom discipline (Sargent, 2011). In addition, the stress of focusing on a dramatic change in their own pedagogy taken together with the pressure for high student test scores may have made it more difficult for teachers to maintain supervision in the classroom (Chen, 2001). We created a variable coded 0 if the teacher answered “no change” or “changed, but not that much” and 1 if the teacher responded “changed.”

*School risk factors.* Our analyses also examine the risk associated with the academic and material resource environments at school and community support for schooling. The variable poor academic context denotes how the school’s graduating class performed on the county level examination compared to other schools in the county (coded 0 if and the exam scores were “excellent,” “above average,” or “average” and coded 1 if the scores were “poor”). In addition, we investigate the material resource environment by including the log of per pupil expenditure, and the community commitment to education. One way that we are able to observe community support in this context is via whether communities have adopted the “one fee system.” This policy aimed to address skyrocketing school fees for compulsory education in poor communities and was rolled out just prior to the fieldwork for this study. Prior to 2006 during the roll-out of the new policy, communities could select to implement the one fee system by committing their local governments to make up any shortfalls incurred by requiring schools to only charge “one fee” to parents. It is important to note that this measure is not a proxy for community financial resources, as the government prioritized the poorest and minority areas for initial implementation of the policy. Instead it captures the community’s commitment to devote scarce resources to

support schooling for local children.

—Table 1 about here.—

### *Analytic strategy*

Given the nested structure of the data and the need to model individual, teacher, and contextual factors simultaneously, we used multi-level logistic regression analysis (MLRA) to take into consideration the correlations among the students who have the same teachers and attend the same schools. This model accounts for the dependence of individual probability on context, and quantifies the effects of clustering with the median odds ratio. To specify the multi-level logistic regression model, we use the *xtnlogit* command in STATA 10.<sup>i</sup>

We estimated a series of nested models. Model 0 included the random parameters (teachers and schools) in order to partition the variance at different levels. Model 1 included the student characteristics, Models 2-4 included the student, teacher, and classroom characteristics, and Model 5 the student, teacher, classroom, and school characteristics. We tested cross-level interaction terms, but did not find any to be significant. To shed light on classroom-to-classroom and school-to-school variability in the outcome, we calculate median odds ratios (MOR) (Larsen and Merlot, 2005).<sup>ii</sup> Median odds ratios measure the variation in clustering when the outcome of interest is binary. Specifically, the MOR associated with the classroom level can be interpreted as how much a student's odds of being victimized would increase if the same student moved to a different classroom within the same school with higher odds of being victimized. An MOR of one indicates that there are no differences between classrooms in their odds of being victimized. The larger the differences between classrooms (or schools), the larger the associated MOR will be.

## Results

### *Prevalence of physical victimization*

First, we consider the prevalence of physical victimization in rural Gansu overall. As Table 1 shows, experiences of physical victimization are not at all uncommon amongst rural junior high school students in Gansu: forty percent reported having been beaten by classmates. When compared to the incidence of school violence in more developed, urban settings in East Asia, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, the prevalence of school violence in rural China is higher. Recent research indicates that approximately 20 percent of Hong Kong students (Wong, 2007) and 30 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Taiwan (Wei et al, 2010) report experiencing victimization by peers at school.

### *Profiles of victims and non-victims*

Table 2 shows student experiences, teacher characteristics, and school contextual characteristics for victims and non-victims, as well as a t-test of difference in mean or proportion by victimization status for each characteristic. Focusing first on student-level variables, compared to non-victims, victims were more likely to be male (62 percent versus 51 percent;  $t=3.08$ ); have a slightly higher internalizing problem score (33.6 versus 32.6,  $t=-2.15$ ); have lower language performance (an average score of 72.26 versus 74.63 on the Chinese language achievement tests,  $t=2.94$ ); and report experiencing more disruptive classroom climates (poor climate score of 2 versus 1.85,  $t=-5.71$ ). Notably, there were not significant differences by victimization status in socioeconomic status, prior math achievement, or perceived support from the teacher.

—Table 2 about here.—

Table 2 also highlights certain differences in teacher characteristics and classroom and school contextual factors by victimization status. Victims were less likely to have male teachers

than non-victims (75 percent versus 83 percent,  $t=2.84$ ). They were also less likely to have teachers recognized for high quality performance than non-victims (40 percent of victims had teachers rated good or outstanding, versus 47 percent of non-victims,  $t=2.01$ ). Victims were less likely than non-victims to be in schools in high community support contexts (27 percent versus 36 percent,  $t=2.54$ ). There were not statistically significant differences by victimization status in teacher education, teacher involvement in curricular reforms, school socioeconomic context, or school academic context.

*Multi-level logistic regression analysis of physical victimization*

—Table 3 about here.—

In Table 3, to isolate risk factors for physical victimization, we present a series of multi-level logistic regression models that incorporate hypothesized individual, teacher, and school factors. For ease of interpretation, we present estimated odds-ratios. An estimated odds-ratio value greater than 1 indicates, net of other factors in the model, a heightened risk of victimization associated with a unit change in the independent variable (a one unit increase in a continuous variable, or a change from the reference category to a non-reference category for a categorical variable). An estimated odds-ratio value that is less than 1 indicates a reduced risk of victimization associated with the same change.

First, to illustrate the variation in scale of victimization by classroom and school context, we present median odds ratios for a null model containing only random parameters for teachers and schools. The null model, model 0, is presented to illustrate variability according to classroom and school contexts. The median odds ratio (MOR) in model 0 associated with teacher/classroom is 1.5. This number indicates a median expected increase of 50 percent in a student's odds of victimization associated with changing to a different teacher/classroom in the same school with a greater risk of victimization. The median odds ratio associated with the school random parameter



is 1.12. This number indicates a median increase of 12 percent in odds of victimization associated with changing to a different teacher/classroom in a different school with higher odds of victimization. These results illustrate the relative importance of teachers and classrooms as contexts for understanding student victimization.

Model 1 has a teacher/classroom MOR of 1.36 and a school effect MOR of 1, indicating for students with the same covariates, a 36 percent increase in the median odds of being victimized with a move to a higher victimization teacher/classroom context, but no residual variability associated with a move to a different school (and teacher). In other words, teacher/classroom effects, or microclimate effects, remain non-trivial after accounting for students' characteristics, but school effects, already modest, are not significant once students' characteristics are taken into account.

Turning to the fixed effects estimated in model 1, male students were more likely to be victimized by peers: the odds-ratio of 1.51 indicates that being male is associated with 51 percent greater odds of being victimized, relative to being female, net of other variables in the model ( $100 \times (1.51 - 1)$ ). In contrast, children who have a history of higher Chinese language performance enjoyed protection from victimization: each point increase on the Chinese language achievement test is associated with a 2 percent decrease in the odds of victimization ( $100 \times (1 - .98)$ ). Age, socioeconomic status, and prior internalizing problems were not significant in this specification.

Including two dimensions of the student microclimate in models 2 and 3 reduced the MOR associated with teacher/classroom effects to 1.23; the MOR illustrates the variation between victimization rates of different teachers/classrooms that is not explained by the risk factors in the models. The MOR associated with schools remained close to 1.00, indicating little variation in victimization between schools. Models 2 and 3 revealed a generally stable pattern of

results for variables included in the first specification. Most notably, males remained at significantly higher risk of physical victimization (odds-ratios=1.58 in both specifications) and students with a history of stronger Chinese language performance continued to enjoy some protection from victimization (odds-ratio=.98 in both specifications). With the exception of prior internalizing problems, the pattern of results for other variables included in model 1 did not change in model 2.

Prior internalizing problems showed no change in estimated magnitude of effect from model 1, with an odds ratio of 1.02 indicating an increase of 2 percent in odds of victimization for each point increase on the internalizing scale, but unlike the case of model 1, internalizing problems achieve significance in model 2 and all subsequent specifications. These findings suggest that children with a history of internalizing problems, such as depression and loneliness, are at greater risk of being victimized by peers.

New in models 2 and 3 were the poor classroom disciplinary climate and teacher support variables. Classroom disciplinary climate was significant, with an odds ratio of over 3.8 in both specifications, indicating dramatically heightened odds of victimization in classrooms characterized by poor behavior, such as stealing, cheating, and generally disruptive behavior. Experiences of teacher support were not statistically significantly related to victimization.

In model 4, the MORs for both teacher/classroom and school random effects are both 1.00, indicating no residual variability associated with school and teacher/classroom context when the teacher characteristics accompanied the covariates included in previous models. The results presented in Model 4 are consistent with model 3, but also highlighted the importance of teacher characteristics. Most notably, students in classrooms supervised by male teachers had about 43 percent lower odds of victimization ( $100*(1-.57)$ ), relative to students in classrooms

headed by female teachers, net of other variables in the model. Students in classrooms headed by high quality teachers – those who are evaluated as high performers at their last yearly evaluation – are at significantly lower risk of victimization. These students experienced about 27 percent lower odds of victimization ( $100*(1-.73)$ ), compared to students with teachers not evaluated as high performers, net of other variables in the models. Finally, different from bivariate results from Table 2, in multivariate models, students in classrooms in which teachers were in the midst of implementing a new, much more student-centered curriculum were at heightened risk for reporting physical victimization. Odds of victimization were 36 percent higher in classrooms headed by teachers implementing the reforms ( $100*(1.36-1)$ ), compared to those in other classrooms, net of other factors in the models.

Finally, model 5 added wider school context variables: logged per pupil expenditures, poor academic climate, and the measure of community commitment to education. MORs associated with the teacher and school random effects remain at 1.00 in this specification. Among the school level variables, only community commitment to education mattered, net of other factors in model 5. Children in schools with a high level of community commitment to education had 37 percent lower odds of experiencing victimization ( $100*(1-.63)$ ), compared to children in other schools, net of other variables in the model. Importantly, the addition of school context variables left stable the pattern of significant results established in earlier specifications, except that prior Chinese language performance was not significant in this specification. Girls, children without internalizing problems, children experiencing less disruptive classrooms, children with male, highly qualified teachers, and children in classrooms not undergoing reforms in curriculum remained at significantly lower risk of victimization.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Our findings show that physical victimization among rural middle school students is non-trivial: 40 percent of students surveyed reported that they had been beaten by classmates. Some students are at greater risk than others. As suggested by prior literature focused on other contexts, our research confirms that certain individual factors that we included in *Hypothesis 1* are associated with higher risk for victimization. Specifically, boys were at heightened risk of victimization, as were students who demonstrated characteristics of psychosocial maladjustment. However, another factor included in the hypothesis did not matter in this context: socioeconomic status—whether measured as mother’s education or as logged family wealth. This finding could be due to the fact that, while there is considerable variability in socioeconomic status in the sample, the sample is, as a whole, relatively poor: rural village residents in one of China’s most disadvantaged provinces. In addition, although we hypothesized that poor academic performance might be a trigger for victimization in China’s highly exam-based, competitive school system, prior math performance had no relationship to victimization. Our analysis revealed a relationship between prior language performance and victimization, though this relationship was no longer significant with a full set of covariates in multilevel models.

One of the most significant findings of the paper is the importance of the classroom microclimate as a context for youth victimization. Results from a null model intended to partition variability showed greater differences in the odds of victimization across classrooms in the same school than those associated with schools themselves. In fact, the modest residual variability associated with schools became negligible once characteristics of students were taken into account, but this was not the case for residual variability associated with classrooms.

In *Hypothesis 2* and *Hypothesis 3*, we highlighted several possible significant teacher and classroom characteristics as risk factors for peer physical victimization. Confirming our

hypotheses, students paired with teachers who were evaluated as lower quality were at greater risk, suggesting that teachers who are effective at managing the academic performance of students were also effective at managing peer interactions and classroom dynamics. Teacher gender proved significant as well: students paired with male teachers were less likely to be victimized by peers. It may be that students perceive male teachers to be stricter disciplinarians, and in turn, are less likely to act out in classrooms supervised by males. Additional dimensions of the classroom environment presented in *Hypothesis 3* were also confirmed as significant risk factors. Students in classrooms with a high degree of disruptive behavior were at heightened risk. After adjusting for covariates in our models, students in classrooms undergoing curricular reforms were also at greater risk; this finding could be attributable to the process of reforming pedagogy itself distracting teachers from classroom management, or it could be due to the fact that the new student-centered curriculum requires much more intense involvement of teachers in management of active, hands-on, student-centered interactions in the classroom.

A number of studies have investigated the school as context, but these studies have found few consistent risk factors for physical victimization beyond community poverty. Findings presented here investigate the factors detailed in *Hypothesis 4* such as the school material resources and academic environment. Our findings reveal only one consistent school-level risk factor for victimization: poor community support for education. Students who lived in communities that did not choose to be earlier implementers of the one fee system were at greater risk for victimization at school. It may be that communities who committed to using local community funds to make up any financial shortfalls associated with the reduction in student fees also harnessed social resources for the purposes of education and created norms regarding schooling that prevent school violence. Children in communities that adopted the one-fee system

may also benefit from increased supervision and concern for general child well-being. One explanation for the limited school context results may be that the classroom micro-climates within the school have the greatest influence on children's experiences of victimization. This finding is consistent with research that emphasizes the ways in which the classroom ecology conditions the pervasiveness of school violence. Moreover, the risk associated with dimensions of teachers and classroom may be even greater in East Asian schools and other collectivist cultures where classroom identity is a salient feature in students' lives.

The pervasiveness of school violence revealed in these analyses are noteworthy because the issue is often absent from discussions focused on reducing risks and improving life chances for youth in rural areas. Strikingly, the findings from our analyses echo the experiences that emerged from retrospective qualitative interviews conducted with forty of the original target children in 2009. In 2009, some of these young adults, aged 18-22, were away attending post-secondary educational institutions, others had exited the educational system, but still lived and worked in the local area, and still others had migrated for work to other areas of China. They were asked to reflect upon their experiences in school, including how they had prepared for examinations, to whom they went to for help if they had problems, what their relationships were like with other students, and if they had had any difficulties in school. Notably, stories of disruptive, and sometimes violent, happenings at school, some experienced by the target child and others undergone by other children and recounted by the target child, emerged as a salient theme more than 30 percent of the interviews. As a way to enrich the discussion of findings and their implications for schooling in the developing world, we share some of these experiences.

Some former students detailed incidents in which students were victimized by their classmates, and ultimately, left school. Their stories describe fellow students using knives,

setting fires, fighting, and stealing. For example, one former student lamented, “In eighth grade, there were troublemakers who sat in the back of the room. They would secretly cut girls’ hair off and some of them would use magnifiers to ignite peoples’ clothes...Once someone used a knife and cut up one of my classmate’s clothes” (Interview 26658537). Another drop-out described a school environment dominated by a gang. He explained that the gang charged 100 RMB for membership and protection, and that he was beaten because he didn’t take part in or pay the gang. He went on to explain that other schoolmates were victimized by the gang as were students at other schools, “The students at the other school were injured badly and sent to the hospital....the police came to investigate...and a dagger was found on someone so the case was really serious” (Interview 26658526). Some students explained that they wanted to leave school after physical altercations with schoolmates. For example, one male explained that he had become involved in a fight after bumping into someone by accident, “....I apologized, but he started cursing me out and we ended up having a big fight. He got injured during the fight, and my family ended up having to pay his medical bill. My mother had to borrow money to compensate his family. I wanted to drop out of school right after the fight” (Interview 26658537). These chronicles of victimization by fellow students reveal a seldom acknowledged barrier to educational persistence for rural children.

Furthermore, the disruption and intimidation associated with physical aggression at school can also adversely affect the learning environment of students who are not the primary targets of the aggression by contributing to a poor school climate. One former student felt that the school administration needed to “make sure there are no fights between students and nobody tries to damage things. This way, the students can get focused on their study....in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, there was a fight almost every day....”(Interview 26658537). Another former student

described a school climate in which the “study mood had collapsed...I think the school and the principal need to be blamed for this....people say that the school pays no attention to the students....”(Interview 26658539). Another student put it plainly, “I just went to school and fooled around with classmates without learning anything. That’s pretty much why [I quit school].” Former students believed that only the school could take care of the problems associated with gangs, robberies, and fighting at school, with one drop-out proclaiming “schools should be responsible for it” (Interview 26658526). Taken together, these narratives give voice to rural students’ day to day experiences with violence at school, and in some instances, suggest that students’ willingness to remain in school may be conditioned by victimization by classmates and poor classroom microclimates.

### *Limitations*

While our findings spotlight important dimensions of an under explored risk facing rural students at school, our research also has limitations. For example, our findings may underestimate the prevalence of school violence in two ways. First, our analyses do not include the 269 students who dropped out of school between the years 2000 and 2004. While prior research suggests that school-leaving is conditioned by several individual and school-related factors, exposure to violence at school may have contributed to their decisions to leave school in some way. Next, in our analyses we utilized a simple measure of peer-peer physical violence, physical victimization, because we believed it would be interpreted consistently by rural students. However, by limiting our conceptualization of school violence, we do not capture other important dimensions of school violence such as psychological or sexual aggression, social exclusion, and bullying; as a result, our estimates of the prevalence of school violence are likely conservative. Moreover, recent research (Benbenishty et al, 2016) also indicates that the



individual and contextual factors that condition school violence vary by type of school violence; in this way, the dimensions of classrooms and communities highlighted in our results may overlook other important characteristics of classroom ecology. In addition, due to data limitations we are not able to establish a causal link or directionality between the individual and contextual risk factors explored in our study and student victimization. Similarly, while the factors investigated in our analyses are associated with increased risk of experiencing violence, we cannot ascertain whether these factors result in victimization. For instance, it is possible that students who have experienced physical victimization at school may be more likely to perceive their classroom environment as disruptive.

### *Implications*

Although our findings cannot establish the factors that cause peer victimization, nor can they determine the direction of the relationship between the individual and contextual factors and school violence, they do clearly illustrate factors that are associated with the risk of peer victimization at middle school in rural, Gansu province, China. In this way, our findings are extremely valuable for policymakers interested in improving the quality of rural education. In recent years, videos capturing violence at school have circulated on social media prompting calls among Chinese netizens for “urgent action to implement laws” to keep students safe (Weibo, November 3, 2016). Our findings can support these efforts by informing the development of educational and social policies to protect students from risk. For instance, knowledge of the individual characteristics related to risk may help educators identify students who are likely to experience these problems. These efforts might include interventions ranging from school policy approaches to peer support initiatives. Furthermore, in China as in many nations, where boys are believed to be more naturally prone to misbehavior, these findings may encourage teachers to

take boys' behavior problems more seriously in primary school to prevent greater odds of experiencing school violence in later years.

Perhaps more importantly, our results indicate educational policymakers and school personnel should pay particular attention to the socio-contextual risk factors, such as classroom disciplinary climate when designing intervention programs at the school level. Students who attend schools with poor classroom disciplinary climates were more likely to experience physical violence from their peers. This finding suggests that intervention programs should not focus on the individual level risk factors for victimization, but should also focus on school and classroom-based efforts that might improve the quality of interpersonal relationships at school and provide teachers with classroom management techniques to reduce cheating, fighting, and other disruptive behavior at school. Indeed, our findings highlight the important role that teachers can play in reducing student risk for victimization. Rural teachers need to know that they can make difference preventing school violence. Interventions that target teacher education and professional development programs in a way that improves rural teachers' classroom management strategies and understanding of the dimensions of classroom ecology associated with school violence could be an effective strategy for keeping students safe. Moreover, teachers engaged in the process of educational reform may particularly benefit from these programs. Importantly, our findings also suggest that teachers' ability to manage the classroom environment and incidents of classroom disruption may be compromised when teachers are under the stress of implementing new educational reforms in high stakes learning environments. By emphasizing the significant role of rural teachers in reducing school violence, our findings also promote policies and programs to support the work of rural teachers in China.

Our results, which highlight the importance of classroom microclimates, both deepen our understanding of the complex risk factors associated with victimization at school and have practical implications for efforts to reduce violence at school. First, our results indicate that physical victimization by classmates is prevalent in rural schools in China's northwestern region. Although some of the individual risk factors associated with victimization in developed settings were identified as risk factors in our study as well, on the whole, individual risk factors explained a relatively small amount of the variation in experiencing violence at school. Instead, we found that dimensions of the classroom microclimates, captured by teacher and classroom features, explained a greater amount of variation than individual or school factors. Complex classroom dynamics shaped in part by teachers' ability to manage student interactions and limit classroom disruption play an important role in promoting a safe environment for children at school. By focusing the spotlight on teachers and classrooms rather than individual students, schools may be more effective in creating a classroom environment that promotes the learning, social development, and safety.

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<sup>i</sup> The functional form of the intercept-only model with no predictors is:

$$\ln\left(\frac{p_{ijk}}{1-p_{ijk}}\right) = \beta_{0jk} = \beta_0 + u_{0k} + \mu_{0jk}$$

<sup>ii</sup> The intraclass correlation coefficient typically used to report variance in multilevel linear models is not meaningful when estimating models with a binary response. Instead we calculate



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median odds ratios (MOR) to shed light on classroom to classroom and school to school

variability in the outcome.  $\text{MOR} = \exp\left(\sqrt{2\sigma^2} \phi^{-1}(0.75)\right)$

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Individual and Contextual Risk Factors for Physical Victimization**

**INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS**

Male	
Psychological vulnerability	+

Socioeconomic status	
Academic achievement	-

**CONTEXTUAL RISK FACTORS**

*Classroom and teacher*

High quality teacher	
More educated teacher	-
Teacher support	

Poor classroom climate	
Teacher implementing reform	+

*School*

Material resources	
Community support	-

Poor academic climate	+
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+ associated with greater risk  
- associated with less risk

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for rural middle school students and the school context**

	Mean	Sd	n
Physical Victimization	0.40	(0.49)	812
<i>Student has been beaten by classmates</i>			
<b><i>Student</i></b>			
Male	0.55	(0.50)	812
Age (2004)	15.22	(1.01)	812
Mother's education in years	4.82	(3.46)	812
Log family wealth 2004	9.70	(0.93)	812
Internalizing scale 2000	33.02	(6.39)	812
Math performance 2000	76.04	(12.40)	812
Chinese performance 2000	73.68	(11.32)	812
<b><i>Classroom and teacher</i></b>			
Poor classroom climate scale (student perception)	1.91	(0.35)	812
Teacher support scale (student perception)	2.88	(0.39)	812
Male teacher	0.79	(0.40)	445
Teacher university graduate	0.19	(0.40)	445
Teacher quality good or outstanding	0.44	(0.49)	445
Teacher implementing reform in the classroom	0.34	(0.47)	445
<b><i>School</i></b>			
Log of per pupil expenditure	4.12	(0.77)	70
Poor academic context	0.03	(.016)	70
Community commitment	0.33	(.047)	70

Data source: GSCF-2000, GSCF-2004

**Table 2. Selected student, teacher and contextual characteristics by victimization status (n=812)**

	Physical Victimization		t-statistic
	No	Yes	
<b><i>Student</i></b>			
Male	0.51	0.62	-3.08**
Age (2004)	15.24	15.19	0.63
Mother's education years	4.91	4.71	0.83
Log of family wealth	9.69	9.71	-0.15
Internalizing scale 2000	32.6	33.6	-2.15*
Math achievement 2000	76.51	75.36	1.33
Chinese achievement 2000	74.63	72.26	2.94*
<b><i>Classroom and teacher</i></b>			
Poor classroom climate scale	1.85	2.00	-5.71*
Teacher support scale	2.89	2.87	0.74
Male teacher	0.83	0.75	2.84**
Teacher university graduate	0.21	0.17	1.59
Teacher evaluated as good or outstanding	0.47	0.40	2.01*
Teacher implementing reform in the classroom	0.32	0.36	-1.30
<b><i>School</i></b>			
Log of per pupil expenditure	4.12	4.13	-0.17
Poor academic context	0.03	0.03	0.40
Community commitment to school	0.36	0.27	2.54**

\*p&lt;.05, \*\*p&lt;.01, \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Data source: GSCF-2000, GSCF-2004

**Table 3. Multi-level logistic regression analysis of physical victimization in rural Chinese middle schools (n=812)**

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<b><i>Student</i></b>						
Male		1.51** (0.23)	1.58** (0.25)	1.58** (0.25)	1.66** (0.26)	1.69** (0.27)
Age		0.79 (1.45)	0.56 (1.03)	0.55 (1.02)	0.80 (1.48)	0.77 (1.43)
Age-squared		1.01 (0.06)	1.02 (0.06)	1.02 (0.06)	1.01 (0.06)	1.01 (0.06)
Mother education		0.98 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	0.97 (0.02)
Log family wealth		1.02 (0.08)	0.99 (0.08)	0.99 (0.08)	0.99 (0.08)	0.97 (0.08)
Internalizing scale 2000		1.02 (0.01)	1.02* (0.01)	1.02* (0.01)	1.02* (0.01)	1.02* (0.01)
Math achievement 2000		1.01 (0.01)	1.01 (0.01)	1.01 (0.01)	1.01 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)
Chinese achievement 2000		0.98* (0.01)	0.98* (0.01)	0.98* (0.01)	0.98* (0.01)	0.98 (0.01)
<b><i>Classroom and teacher</i></b>						
Poor classroom climate scale			3.83*** (0.92)	3.86*** (0.95)	3.88*** (0.90)	3.90*** (0.90)
Teacher support scale				1.04 (0.20)		
Male teacher					0.57** (0.11)	0.54** (0.10)
Teacher education					0.75 (0.15)	0.74 (0.14)
Teacher quality					0.73* (0.11)	0.71* (0.11)
Teacher implementing reform					1.36* (0.22)	1.37* (0.22)
<b><i>School</i></b>						
Log per pupil expenditure						1.01 (0.10)
Poor academic climate						0.62 (0.25)
Community commitment						0.63*** (0.11)
<b>Random effects</b>						
Teacher (intercept)	0.426 (0.253)	0.326 (0.307)	0.218 (0.490)	0.214 (0.500)	2.11e-07 (0.390)	4.87e-08 (0.357)
MOR <sub>teacher</sub>	1.50	1.36	1.23	1.23	1.00	1.00
School (intercept)	0.126 (0.220)	2.05e-07 (0.369)	0.056 (0.447)	0.058 (0.443)	3.99e-09 (0.193)	3.93e-09 (0.134)
MOR <sub>school</sub>	1.12	1.00	1.06	1.06	1.00	1.00

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Data source: GSCF-2000, GSCF-2004