

CHARACTEROLOGICAL SELF-BLAME AND VICTIMIZATION AMONG
ADOLESCENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Peer victimization has numerous negative consequences for adolescent adjustment, including anxiety and depression (Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie & Telch, 2010). To effectively intervene and help victims of peer harassment, it is crucial to understand how victims make sense of their experience. One way that children and adolescents make sense out of victimization is to make characterological self-blame attributions. Characterological self-blame attributions are attributions that are stable, internal, and uncontrollable (i.e. “there is something wrong with me that I can’t change,” “I’m not cool enough”) and these attributions seem to account, in part, for the relation between peer victimization and internalizing problems (Graham & Juvonen, 1998). However, past studies have found that marginalization, as operationalized as being from a racial/ethnic numerical minority group in a low diversity school, moderates how peer victimization is not related to characterological self-blame (Graham, Bellmore, Nishina & Juvonen, 2009). Graham et al. (2009) suggested that one way to explain this is the possibility that that marginalized students attribute victimization to the prejudice of others. The current study found that characterological self-blame mediated the relationship between victimization and internalizing problems. This link between victimization and characterological self-blame was moderated by attributions of prejudice. Results imply the importance of promoting healthier attributional styles to attenuate negative consequences of victimization on adjustment.

Keywords: Adolescents, victimization, self-blame attributions, SES, prejudice, adjustments

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

α	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
b	Unstandardized regression coefficients
df	Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data
$>$	Greater than
$<$	Less than
$=$	Equal to
M	Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set
SD	Standard Deviation
r	Pearson product-moment correlation
p	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
t	Computed value of t test
z	Computed value of Sobel test
CSB	Characterological Self-Blame
BSB	Behavioral Self-Blame
SSS	Subjective Socioeconomic Status

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Introduction

Adolescence is a period of changes. The physical appearance and behaviors of youth change during puberty, but so does the nature of their relationships and interactions with others. Peer relationships grow in importance as youth begin to spend increasingly more time with their peers than with family (Bowker, 2004; Larson & Richards, 1991). It is also a period of increased conflict. Aggressive behavior and victimization temporarily increase during the transition to middle school (Nylund, Belmore, Nishina & Graham, 2007; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Because it is also when social status and peer acceptance gain prominence, negative social experiences such as peer harassment can be especially detrimental to adolescent mental health (Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

Peer victimization has been found to have multiple negative consequences on both mental and physical health and has also been linked to internalizing problems such as loneliness, anxiety, unhappiness, depression, and low self-esteem, as well as externalizing problems such as delinquent behaviors (Zins & Elias, 2003; Graham et al., 2009; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003; Olweus, 1994). In addition, victimized children are more likely to develop academic adjustment problems and dislike school (Juvonen, Nishina & Graham, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). Why might these victims of harassment feel this way? What may explain the relationships between victimization and maladjustment? The current study examines how peer victimization is related to internalizing problems, focusing on if characterological self-blame may explain the association. As others have found that marginalization within school contexts may change how victimization is related to characterological self-blame (Graham et al.,

2009), the paper will also examine how adolescents' subjective SES may moderate these associations.

Attributional Styles

To explain how social problems that children and adolescents experience may affect their adjustment, it is important to understand how they perceive their social experiences (Crick & Ladd, 1993). The attributions that children and adolescents make regarding the causes of victimization may enhance our understanding of victimization and its outcomes. Attributional style refers a person's tendency to make certain types of causal inferences for social outcomes (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995). For instance, upon experiencing a negative event, a child may derive pejorative self-evaluations to explain why such an event occurred to them (i.e., "This happened to be because I am not as good as others"). Making critical self-referent attributions has implications for internalizing symptoms such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety because of their negative influence on children's self-perceptions and mood (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Haines, Metalsky, Cardamone & Joiner, 1999). These attributions are also highly associated with poorer peer experiences such as rejection and victimization (Prinstein, Cheah & Guyer, 2005).

Similarly, Abramson, Metalsky, and Alloy's (1989) model of learned helplessness suggests that an individual who attributes failures or other negative life events to internal, global, and stable causes is at a higher risk for developing depressive symptoms. According to the model, when an individual perceives the causes of a negative event to be internal and stable, it leads to feelings of helplessness; the situation is uncontrollable because an individual's acts are not associated with the desired outcomes. The model further suggests that the consequences of the expectation of uncontrollability are motivational and cognitive deficits, which can lead to the inappropriate generalization of the learned helplessness to new controllable situations.

Compatible with research on learned helplessness is the concept of self-blame. According to Graham and Juvonen (1998), there are two types of self-blame: characterological self-blame (CSB) and behavioral self-blame (BSB). CSB are attributions that are negative, internal, stable, and uncontrollable (i.e. “there is something wrong with me,” “I’m not cool enough”). CSB is psychologically maladaptive; these attributions are correlated with indicators of maladjustment such as depression, loneliness, anxiety, and negative self-worth (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Graham & Juvonen, 1997; Schacter, White, Chang & Juvonen, 2015). CSB is distinguished from behavioral self-blame (BSB), which is a type of attribution that is also internal, but is unstable and controllable (i.e. “it’s because of what I did”). Thus, BSB may lead to more adaptive or active strategies to cope with negative events.

The distinctions between the two types can be best explained by Weiner’s Attribution Theory (1986). Attribution Theory, originally developed to study attributions about achievement, is concerned with people’s interpretation of causality, or why a particular (negative) event occurred and the effect of the attribution on their emotional, motivational, and behavioral reactions. According to Weiner (1986), people make attributions along three causal dimensions: internal vs. external, stable vs. unstable, and controllable vs. uncontrollable. For example, in a peer victimization situation, an internal, stable, and uncontrollable attribution made by the victim ascribes the cause of victimization to one’s unchangeable and stable characteristics (e.g., “It’s because I’m ugly”), leading the victim to believe that he/she has little control over the situation. On the contrary, attributing victimization to an external, unstable, and controllable cause (e.g., “I shouldn’t have been there”) allows controllability over the situation such that as long as the victim avoids certain behaviors, he/she can prevent further victimization. The former corresponds with CSB and the latter with BSB. Applying the three causal dimensions in the

context of peer victimization (“Why was I bullied?”), BSB attributes victimization to actions or behaviors that are controllable and therefore unstable and modifiable (“I shouldn’t have been in the locker room”). CSB focuses on internal factors that are uncontrollable, stable, and unmodifiable (“It’s something about me, and things will always be this way”).

A number of past studies have found that CSB explains how victimization is related to maladjustment. For instance, Schacter et al. (2015) examined continued victimization and CSB among 6th graders. They measured self-perceived victimization, depressive symptoms, and CSB in the fall and they measured self-perceived victimization again in the spring. Along with fall victimization and depression, CSB predicted spring victimization. The result suggests that CSB is a unique risk factor contributing to future victimization. Additional mediation analyses indicated that CSB and depression partially explained the continuation of victimization from the fall to the spring semester for middle school students.

Others find that CSB may explain how victimization predicts changes in internalizing problems. Graham and Juvonen (1998) examined the relationship among self-perceived victim status, internalizing problems (loneliness, social- anxiety, and self- worth), and CSB in a sample of middle-school students. Regression analyses revealed that CSB still significantly predicted maladjustment, particularly loneliness and social anxiety, even after taking into account the effect of victim status. CSB also partly mediated the effect of self-perceived victim status on adjustment problems.

Social Context and Attributions About Victimization

Although it seems that CSB may partially explain why peer victimization is associated with internalizing problems in childhood and adolescence, it is important to take social contexts into account as well. It may be that the environment may influence if victimization is associated

with CSB. For instance, it seems that peer victimization is related to CSB when victim status deviates from the norm of the environment. For example, Schacter and Juvonen (2015) examined sixth graders' change in self-blaming attributions, including CSB, over the sixth-grade year from fall to spring as a predictor of peer victimization and considering school-level victimization as a moderator. The results indicated that for victimized youth in schools with low levels of overall victimization, CSB steeply escalated from fall to spring, whereas for victimized students in schools with higher levels of victimization, behavioral self-blame increased in the spring. These findings suggest that victims in schools where victimization is uncommon may feel "different," and it is easier for them to believe that "it's all my fault." Contrastingly, in an environment where victimization experience is typical, it may be easier for victims to find alternative explanations (e.g., externalize the blame, see it as a common experience, blame their situational behaviors).

Another social context to consider is school ethnic and racial diversity. Graham et al. (2009) examined school racial/ethnic diversity as a moderator of the association between victimization and self-blaming attributions (CSB) among middle school students. They measured victim status in the fall and then measured CSB, depression, and self-worth in the spring. Findings indicated that for members of a numerical majority ethnic group in a low diversity school, CSB mediated the relation between fall victimization and spring maladjustment. However, for members of a numerical minority ethnic group in a low diversity school, peer victimization was not related to CSB. To explain these findings, Graham et al. (2009) suggested that minority students in a low diversity school may attribute peer harassment to the prejudice of peers instead of blaming themselves. Although not assessed in the study, they suggested that attributing victimization to perpetrators' prejudice allowed youth to discount the personal

deservingness of negative experiences, thus protecting their self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989), and possibly decreasing CSB as well.

It may be possible that the findings of Graham et al. (2009) are not limited to the attributions of racial/ethnic minority youth. It may be that other traditionally marginalized groups would also be less likely to make self-blame attributions when they are victimized by peers and, instead be more likely to make attributions of prejudice. The current study will examine how adolescents' assessments of their socioeconomic status, as an indicator of their perception of marginalization, may moderate how victimization is related to attributions of CSB and prejudice.

Socioeconomic Status and Peer Victimization

Adolescents' socioeconomic status (SES) has been studied as a predictor of peer victimization. Bullying and victimization happen in the context of a disproportional power relationship (Olweus, 1994). One of the possible sources of such a power imbalance is SES. Many studies have found that victims tended to have less affluent backgrounds, whereas bullies are more likely to have wealthier backgrounds (Due, Trab Damsgaard, Lund & Holstein, 2009; Chaux & Castellanos, 2015; Tsuno et al., 2015). Similarly, children who own expensive possessions and have money to spend are more likely to be popular than peers, and popularity increases the odds of being a bully (Lease, Kennedy & Axelrod, 2002). Furthermore, not only are children from low SES families more likely to be victims to peer harassment, the impact and consequences of victimization are more detrimental and longer lasting for these socioeconomically disadvantaged children. For example, on top of their vulnerability to bullying, adolescents in a lower socioeconomic position are at higher risk of depression later in life compared to their counterparts from more affluent childhood socioeconomic backgrounds (Due et al., 2009).

Although some find that low SES is a risk factor for bullying, others do not find this association or do not find the association to be particularly strong. Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, and Piha (2000) did not find any significant relationship between socioeconomic status and bullying in their longitudinal 8-year follow-up study. Furthermore, the results from a recent meta-analysis by Tippett and Wole (2014) indicated that there is only a small association between low SES and victimization. Additionally, the negative relationship between SES and victim status was significantly heterogeneous (Tippett & Wole, 2014), suggesting that there is more than just a simple association between victimization and SES.

Beyond how SES may be related to victimization, we suggest that adolescents' attributions about the prejudice of their peers regarding their SES may also be applicable to understanding variability in how youth make sense of victimization. It is possible that youth with a low SES background may attribute negative treatment by peers to prejudice against low income people (i.e., "He/She is prejudiced against poor people") instead of to self. Although there may be a direct association between SES and victimization, we suggest that adolescents who attribute negative treatment by peers as due to the prejudice of their peers, may not make as many self-blame attributions.

Attribution of Prejudice

How would attributions that victimization being due to the prejudice of peers affect youth adjustment? According to the attributional ambiguity perspective (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, Kaiser & McCoy, 2003), when a member of a stigmatized or negatively stereotyped group is also aware of being a target of negative treatment, he or she can attribute this negative experience to prejudice. By discounting personal responsibility for the experience and having a plausible external cause (prejudice), attributions of prejudice may be more protective of self-

esteem than attributions of personal deservingness (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, Kaiser & McCoy, 2003). The attributional ambiguity perspective does acknowledge the internal component of prejudice in relation to social identity, but also argues that attributions of prejudice also encompass the assumption of injustice and moral wrongdoing (Crocker & Major, 1994), thus attributing negative treatment to other's prejudice is an external attribution and less emotionally painful in comparison to internal and stable attributions, such feeling as if you lack ability or a special quality (Major, Kaiser & McCoy, 2003).

Results of studies comparing how people make sense of experiences when they think another person is prejudiced seem to support the attributional ambiguity perspective. For example, when Aboriginal participants interacted with a highly prejudiced White partner without the knowledge of their high prejudice, their self-esteem decreased compared to when they interacted with a low prejudiced White partner (Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). Contrastingly, when Major, Kaiser, McCoy (2003) asked participants to respond to hypothetical situations in which participants were denied admission to a course by a professor, participants that were in the prejudice condition (the professor was labeled a "sexist") were less likely to self-blame, less likely to make internal attributions, and less likely to be depressed compared to participants in the personal rejection conditions (the professor "thought they were stupid"). In addition, participants in the prejudice conditions did not significantly differ from participants in the condition where participants thought the professor would reject everyone (the professor was "a real jerk") on their report of depressed emotions. Overall, they found that increases in attributions of discrimination decreased self-blame as well as depressed emotions.

However, there are also a number of past findings regarding the negative toll of perceived discrimination. Perceived discrimination is a subjective interpretation of mistreatment

due to discrimination based on membership in a certain social group (Paradies, 2006). Consequences of perceived discrimination may well exceed the repercussion of discrimination itself (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), because perpetrators' negative beliefs or prejudice against the stigmatized individual and individual's group may be internalized into negative self-perceptions (Goffman, 1963). Past research has found negative relationships between perceived discrimination and various types of psychological well-being. For instance, perceived discrimination is negatively correlated with self-esteem and self-evaluations (Grier & Cobbs, 1969; Williams, Neighbors & Jackson, 2003) and positively related to depressive symptoms (Munford, 1994).

Thus, there is mixed evidence about whether attributions about victimization being due to peer prejudice would be self-protective in the United States. The current study explores this question by directly asking participants how likely they would be to attribute hypothetical negative peer interactions to perpetrator's prejudice against lower SES peers. We also examine how perceptions of prejudice may be related to internalizing problems and may account for relationships between victimization and internalizing problems.

Subjective Socioeconomic Status

Social class is often measured by assessing external objective indicators of socioeconomic status (SES), such as household income, job, and educational attainment (Oakes & Rossi, 2003). However, there are some fundamental issues in using objective indicators to measure social class. For instance, it is unclear how to produce a single value for social class by combining multiple measures of objective SES indicators (e.g., education, household income). Furthermore, there is not agreement on what the social class stratification framework looks like and what criteria constitute a particular social class (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto & Wicker,

1996; Liu, Ali, Soleck, Hopps, & Pickett Jr, 2004; Oakes & Rossi, 2003). Given that social status can affect many aspects of a person's life, it is important to address the limitations of objective measures of SES and look for a better alternative to capture the complexity of social class. Singh- Manoux, Marmot, and Adler (2005) suggest that perceived rank in relation to others in the social hierarchy is an element that makes up class, but the traditional objective SES does not account for relative social rank. To address this issue and concerns about the validity of objective measures of SES, researchers have turned to more subjective measures of social status (Kraus, Piff & Keltner, 2009).

Subjective social status (SSS) is an individual's perception of one's socioeconomic rank relative to others in the community (McLaughlin, Costello, Leblanc, Sampson & Kessler, 2011). There is an ample evidence suggesting that SSS is a unique predictor of different facets of health independent from the traditional objective SES. Even after adjusting for objective SES, SSS significantly predicts psychological distress, global health ratings, mental disorders (mood disorders, anxiety, substance abuse, behavior disorder) and physiological health (Sakurai, Kawakami, Yamaoka, Ishikawa & Hashimoto, 2010; Goodman, Huang, Schafer-Kalkhoff & Adler, 2007; McLaughlin, Costello, Leblanc, Sampson & Kessler, 2012).

Moreover, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that subjective experiences may be more related to psychological well-being than are objective indicators. For example, self-reports of victimization are more related to well-being than are peer reports (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). For example, Graham and Juvonen (1998) found that self-reports of victimization were more predictive of emotional consequences such as loneliness, social anxiety, and low self-esteem. Children who self-reported themselves as victims, but were not nominated by peers as victims (the "paranoids") were more similar in emotional well-being to the "true" victims (those that

both self-reported and perceived by peers as victims) than were children that were nominated by peers as victims but did not see themselves as victims (the “deniers”). These “deniers” showed more similarities to non-victims in terms of CSB and adjustment. In other words, subjective experience is more proximal to intra-psychological adjustment, suggesting that subjective experiences and feelings within the context may be more influential than objective indicators of the context.

Thus, we will assess the subjective and relativistic nature of socioeconomic status as a potential moderator of how victimization is predictive of attributions. We suggest that SSS may indicate feelings of social marginalization and may moderate the link between victimization and attributions of CSB and prejudice. Those that have lower SSS will have alternative explanations for their negative peer experiences, like peers’ prejudice and may be less likely to blame themselves for victimization.

The Present Study

When adolescents are victimized and are also members of the numerical majority group in a class, they are more likely to blame themselves (CSB), attributing the reason for victimization to their inner character, which is also associated with internalizing problems. Conversely, being members of the numerical minority group in a low diversity class, adolescents are less likely to make characterological self-blame when victimized (Graham et al., 2009). This phenomenon may potentially be due to minority students making attributions about victimization being due to victimizer’s prejudice instead of themselves. The proposed study will extend this question to other forms of marginalization. The aim of this study is to examine how perceived SES relative to peers may also moderate how victimization is related to attributions of self-blame and prejudice.

In the current study, we hypothesize that peer victimization will be related to characterological self-blame in adolescents, which in turn will account for the association between peer victimization and internalizing problems. It is also hypothesized that feeling lower in social class would weaken the association between victimization and CSB. We also consider the question of whether SSS would moderate how victimization is related to attributions of prejudice based on income. It is hypothesized that feeling lower in social class would strengthen the relation between victimization and attributions of prejudice based on income.

Method

Participants

Participants were 292 adolescents, including boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 16 years old (37% male, 57.5% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 13.59$, $SD = .65$). At the time of data collection, all participants were in either 7th or 8th grade (52.7% in 8th grade). Participants self-identified as White/Caucasian (79.5%), African American/Black (4.8%), Hispanic (3.8%), American Indian/Alaska native (1.0%), Asian (.7%), Native Hawaiian/ Pacific islander (.7%), and other race (1.4%). 1.7% of the participants preferred not to answer. Approximately 77.4% of the youth's parents were married whereas approximately 13.7% of the youth's parents were either separated or divorced.

Participants were recruited from three religiously affiliated private schools in Alabama. First, 54.8% of participants ($n = 160$) were recruited from Briarwood Christian School located in Birmingham, Alabama. A total of 304 letters were sent home in the late fall of 2018 to families describing the study and asking for parent's consent. Of the families contacted, 234 returned the consent forms, and 160 students had parents who granted them permission to participate in the study also assented to participate. Second, 19.9% of participants ($n = 58$) were recruited from Holy Spirit Catholic School located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Recruitment letters were sent out in early spring of 2019 to the parents of all 7th and 8th grade students. Out of 61 adolescents, 60 adolescents' parents consented to have their children participate in the study. Of these 60, 58 students assented to participate. Lastly, 25.3% of participants ($n = 74$) were recruited from

American Christian Academy located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Recruitment letters were sent out in the early spring of 2019 of all 7th and 8th grade students. Of 139 total letters sent home, 114 were returned. Seventy-four parents gave consents for their children to participate in the study, and 74 students assented to participate.

Procedure

The study was administered in group or classroom sessions in school settings. Adolescents whose parents had consented to let their child participate were read the assent script and allowed to choose whether to participate. Adolescents who assented completed paper-and-pencil measures as described below. All participants received small gifts (e.g., pencils, pens) as “thank you” gifts for completing measures. Participants from Briarwood Christian School received a pizza party as a reward for returning consent forms in addition to the small gifts.

Measures

Demographic variables. Participants were asked to report their age, grade level, gender, parents’ marital status, race/ethnicity, estimated annual family income, and parents’ occupations (Appendix A).

Peer victimization. Adolescents’ peer victimization experiences was assessed using the Children’s Social Experiences Questionnaire-Self Report (CSEQ-SR; Crick & Crotpeter, 1996) (Appendix B). The CSEQ- SR consists of three subscales: relational victimization (e.g., “How often do other kids leave you out on purpose when it is time to play or do an activity?”), overt victimization (e.g., “How often does another kid kick you or pull your hair?”), and recipient of prosocial behavior (e.g., “How often do other kids let you know that they care about you?”. Each subscale contains five items and participants rate each item on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time) regarding how often they experience overt or victimization or prosocial behavior at school.

All three subscales have demonstrated high internal reliability in past studies ($\alpha = .80, .78,$ and $.77$ for the relational victimization, overt victimization, and prosocial recipient scales, respectively) (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). For this study, items on the relational victimization and overt victimization scales were combined analysis. The Cronbach's α of the combined subscales was $.886$.

Characterological self-blaming attributions. Participants were presented with six hypothetical peer victimization scenarios, depicting the respondent as the target of victimization. These scenarios were based off of Graham and Juvonen's (1998) vignettes and were developed to be relevant for a middle school setting (see Appendix C). Participants read and responded to three situations depicting verbal victimization scenarios (i.e., someone says a curse word to you, people talk badly about the way you look, a classmate calls you stupid) and three situations depicting relational victimization scenarios (i.e., someone stops a person from helping you, people ignore you, people don't allow you to hang out with them). After reading each vignette, participants were then be asked "What would you be thinking in this situation?" followed by 12 statements representing different kinds of attributions. Participants rated each of the 12 items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*I definitely would not think this way*) to 5 (*I would definitely think this way*).

Five items assessed characterological self-blame (e.g., "If I were a cooler kid, this wouldn't happen to me"; "This happened to me because of how I look"; "This happened to me because I can't stay out of trouble;" "This happened to me because I'm poorer than my classmates;" "This happened to me because I'm poorer than my classmates"). CSB attribution items were internally reliable across the vignettes ($\alpha = .910$) and were averaged together across all 6 vignettes to create one score for CSB attributions.

Participants also rated an attribution pertaining to peer prejudice (“These kids are prejudiced”) assessing participants’ attribution to peer’s prejudice as the reason for victimization. Across the 6 vignettes prejudice attributions were internally reliable ($\alpha = .910$) and, thus, they were averaged to create one score for prejudice attributions.

Depressive symptoms. Depressive symptoms were measured using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC) (Appendix D). The CES-DC is an 11-item scale measuring three domains of behavioral and cognitive components of depression. Participants will rated each item on a scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*a lot*) regarding how much they had felt a certain way during the previous week. Total scores were calculated by summing up the scores with possible scores ranging from 0 to 33. The CES-DC has demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$) for children and adolescents with psychiatric conditions in the United States (Faulstich, Carey, Ruggiero, Enyart & Gresham, 1986). The CES-DC has also been validated in Faulstich et al.’s study (1986) with adolescents in the United States. Cronbach's α for the scale for the present study was .855.

Social anxiety. Social anxiety was measured using selected items from the Social Anxiety Scale for Children-Revised (LaGreca & Stone, 1993) and Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory for Children (Beidel, Turner & Morris, 1993) (Appendix E). The social anxiety scale is comprised of 22 statements concerning avoidance of or distress in various social situations. Participants rated each statement on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*all the time*). For the proposed study, we selected 22 statements that had factor loadings greater than .40 in the study by Moon and Oh (2002). The subscales have demonstrated high internal consistency ranging from .79 to .92. Cronbach's α for the scale for the present study was .804.

Self-worth. Participants completed the 5-item global self-worth subscale from Harter's (2012) Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) (Appendix F). For each item, participants were instructed to read two statements and then decide which statement describes them more closely. Scale items are typically phrased as follows: "Some teenagers are often disappointed with themselves BUT other teenagers are pretty pleased with themselves." After choosing one of the two statements, participants chose how true the statement was for them ("Sort of True to me"; "Really True for me"). Higher scores indicate greater global self-worth. The subscale has demonstrated high internal consistency ranging from .80 to .89 (Harter, 2012). Cronbach's α for the scale for the present study was .843.

Subjective social status. Participants' subjective social status was assessed using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status-Youth Version (Goodman, Adler, Kawachi, Frazier, Huang & Graham, 2001) (Appendix G). The measure consists of two ladders with 10 rungs representing people with different levels of social status. Participants were instructed to fill in the circle next to the rung where they feel their family's socioeconomic status stands relative to their peers at school, in terms of income and wealth. They completed the same ladder again to indicate where they think their family's socioeconomic status stands compare to the American society as a whole. Along with the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status, participants also rated their family's income relative to the family incomes of their peers at school on a scale divided into ten sections ranging from "less money" to "more money." If the participants thought their family income was relatively the same as their peers' they would mark the middle box indicated as "same." Ratings of the three scores were highly correlated (r 's $> .552, p < .001$). A single score was computed by averaging the three standardized scores. Cronbach's α for the standardized scores for the present study was .795.

Results

All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v.23. To ensure accuracy of the data entry, all data was entered twice by two different research assistants and cross-checked for consistency. Inconsistent data entries were checked and re-entered.

Data Cleaning and Missing Data Procedures

Prior to proceeding with analyses, data were checked for missingness. Data were collected over two separate days, and there was attrition as well as new participants on the second data collection day when social anxiety was assessed. This resulted in a significantly larger portion of data missing for social anxiety. To address this issue, analyses with social anxiety had fewer participants. For analyses examining relations between victimization, attributions, and depression or self-worth a sample of 272 adolescents is used. For analyses of social anxiety, only 252 participants had complete data. Out of the twenty participants that were missing social anxiety score, sixteen were absent on day 2, and four skipped the social anxiety measure. Participants with full data were not significantly different from participants with missing data in terms of age, race, and gender. There was a significant difference by grade, with the full data set having a greater ratio of 8th graders, $\chi^2(1) = 4.496, p = .034$. Furthermore, we also compared participants that had missing data due to being absent compared to those who had missing data due to skipping questions. There was no significant difference between the two groups on race, age, gender, or grade.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Attributions Measure

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the attribution measure was conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of the questionnaire. Specifically, the goal was to confirm underlying constructs of CSB and to examine whether attributions of prejudice were unique to other attributions. Based on the model modification indices of the first model, the second and final model included two sets of freed correlations among unique factors (Item 2 “If I were a cooler kid, this wouldn’t happen to me” and item 7 “This happened to me because of my race or ethnic background”; item 5 “These kids were in a bad mood” and item 10 “I was at the wrong place at the wrong time”). These items were allowed to correlate in the model because of their overlap in Weiner’s (1986) causal domains. Item 2 and 7 are both internal, stable, and uncontrollable. Item 5 and 10 are unstable and attributing the situation as the cause. The final model demonstrated an adequate fit: $\chi^2/df = 3.50:1$, CFI = .90, and SRMR = .075. The final standardized estimated model obtained by freeing two correlations are provided in Table 1. In the current study, Cronbach’s α for the CSB scale was .910 and for prejudice attribution was .910.

Descriptive Analyses

Means and standard deviations of the variables are presented in Table 2. T-tests were also conducted to examine the gender differences between males and females on our variables of interest (see Table 2). Males were significantly higher than females on the endorsement of prejudice attributions, $t(261) = 2.01, p = .046$, and on global self-worth, $t(271) = 2.42, p = .02$. Females scored reported more depressive symptoms, $t(267) = -2.33, p = .02$, and social anxiety, $t(254) = -3.01, p = .003$. Males and females did not significantly differ in CSB and victimization.

All variables were examined for assumptions of normality. The majority of the variables had normal distributions. However, victimization and CSB were positively skewed, with most

participants reporting low victimization and CSB. Both variables were log transformed for subsequent analyses.

Bivariate correlations were computed to examine the interrelations amongst our variables of interest (see Table 3). Age was positively associated with victimization and negatively associated with prejudice attributions and global self-worth. Victimization was positively associated with CSB, prejudice attributions, depression, and social anxiety and negatively associated with global self-worth and subjective social-status. CSB was positively associated with prejudice attributions, depression, and social anxiety and negatively associated with global self-worth and subjective social-status. Prejudice attributions were positively associated with social anxiety. Subjective social status was positively associated with global self-worth and negatively associated with depression and social anxiety. Global self-worth was negatively associated with depression and social anxiety. Depression was positively associated with social anxiety.

The correlations were also examined separately for gender and compared using Fischer's r to z test (see Table 4). Correlations were significantly larger for males compared to females for the association between age and victimization ($z = 1.97, p = .024$), age and SSS ($z = 2.71, p = .003$), attributions of prejudice with victimization ($z = 2.14, p = .016$), attributions of prejudice with CSB ($z = 1.7, p = .045$), and attributions of prejudice with social anxiety ($z = 2.87, p = .002$). Males also had a larger correlation between attributions of prejudice with SSS than females, but the correlation was marginally significant ($z = -1.62, p = .053$).

The majority of the participants either skipped the item or reported that they did not know their annual household income, however there was a portion ($n = 65$) who did report their family's annual income. Using this population, we examined the relation between household

income and SSS. The bivariate correlations indicated that SSS and reported annual family income were positively correlated ($r = .593, p = .000$). The significant positive correlation between two variables demonstrates that subjective index of socioeconomic status may reflect, in part, objective social status. Moreover, while SSS significantly correlated with all three adjustment indices, as well as victimization and CSB, indicating that the poorer an adolescent perceived themselves to be relative to their peers, the worse his or her adjustment outcomes were, income did not significantly correlate with any variables. This provided an additional support for our choice of SSS over an objective income variable, in that SSS was related to participants' psychological well-being when household income was not.

Main Analysis Using Bootstrapping Method

To examine the proposed hypotheses of the current study, a series of bootstrapping analyses were conducted for estimating direct and indirect effects with a mediator and interactions with a moderator, using SPSS macro PROCESS following the guidelines of Hayes (2018).

CSB as a Mediator between Victimization and Internalizing Problems

To address the first hypothesis that CSB would explain how victimization is related to internalizing problems, a mediation analysis was conducted. Mediation was evaluated by examining the contributions of victimization to CSB (path A) and the three indicators of internalizing problems (depression, global self-worth, social anxiety) without the mediator (path C) and with the mediator (path C') and the contributions of CSB to internalizing problems (path B; see Figure 1).

Depression. First, the mediation of CSB between victimization and depression was examined. The bootstrap results indicated that the total effect of victimization, ignoring the

mediator, was significant for depression (path C; $b = 24.00$, $t(269) = 11.18$, $p = .000$). Victimization also significantly predicted CSB (path A), $b = .43$, $t(269) = 8.85$, $p = .000$, and CSB significantly contributed to depression (path B), $b = 11.21$, $t(268) = 4.27$, $p = .000$. The direct effect of victimization on internalizing problems remained significant even with CSB as a mediator in the model. However, when CSB was included in the model, the direct effect was reduced by approximately 25% from its value without the mediator (path C'; $b = 19.20$, $t(268) = 8.12$, $p = .000$). The mediator accounted for roughly 20% of the total effect. Thus, there was a significant indirect effect of victimization on depression through CSB, $ab = 4.80$, 95% confidence interval [CI] = 2.37, 7.72.

Self-worth. Next, the mediation of CSB between victimization and global self-worth was examined. Results indicated a significant total effect of victimization, ignoring the mediator (path C), $b = -2.25$, $t(269) = -9.00$, $p = .000$. Victimization significantly predicted CSB (path A), $b = .43$, $t(269) = 8.85$, $p = .000$, and in turn, CSB significantly contributed to global self-worth (path B), $b = 1.51$, $t(268) = -4.99$, $p = .000$. CSB in the model as a mediator reduced the direct effect of victimization by approximately 28% (path C'), $b = -1.61$, $t(268) = -5.89$, $p = .000$. CSB accounted for roughly 29% of the total effect. There was a significant indirect effect of victimization on global self-worth through CSB, $ab = 0.65$, 95% CI = -0.99, -0.36.

Social anxiety. Lastly, the mediation of CSB between victimization and social anxiety was examined. There was a significant total effect of victimization disregarding the mediator (path C), $b = 38.65$, $t(249) = 6.54$, $p = .000$. Victimization significantly predicted CSB (path A), $b = .44$, $t(249) = 8.81$, $p = .000$, and in turn, CSB significantly contributed to social anxiety (path B), $b = 43.57$, $t(248) = 6.20$, $p = .000$. CSB in the model as a mediator reduced the direct effect of victimization by approximately 50% (path C'), $b = 19.58$, $t(248) = 3.11$, $p = .002$. CSB

accounted for roughly 49% of the total effect. There was a significant indirect effect of victimization on global self-worth through CSB, $ab = 19.17$, 95% CI = 12.21, 27.40.

SSS as a Moderator of How Victimization is Associated with CSB

The second hypothesis sought to further explore the association between victimization and CSB, specifically whether subjective feelings of lower social status weakened the tie between victimization and CSB. Moderated mediation analyses using a bootstrapping procedure showed that SSS did not moderate victimization's association with CSB for any of the internalizing problem symptoms, $b = -.0066$, $t(263) = -.1123$, $p = .911$. Thus, no further investigation proceeded.

Exploratory Analyses: Prejudice Attributions as a Moderator

As exploratory analyses, the role of prejudice attributions was evaluated. First, prejudice attributions were examined as a potential mediator between victimization and internalizing problems. No significant mediation was found. Attributions of prejudice did not significantly predict internalizing problems, and the indirect effect of victimization on internalizing problems through prejudice attributions was not significant.

Next, to examine whether prejudice attributions weaken the relationship between victimization and CSB, moderation analyses were conducted. Since there were significant gender differences in the magnitude of the correlations between attributions of prejudice and victimization and between attributions of prejudice and CSB, gender was included in the analyses as a covariate (gender was also a significant predictor for CSB, $b = .0389$, $t(255) = 2.83$, $p = .005$)¹. There was a significant interaction between victimization and prejudice attribution in predicting CSB, $b = -.0815$, $p = .03$. The effect of victimization on CSB was

¹ A three-way interaction of gender, victimization, and prejudice attributions was examined, but it was not significant in predicting CSB.

probed at low (-1 SD), average, and high (+1 SD) levels of prejudice attributions. Simple slope analyses revealed that the association between victimization and CSB was greater when attributions of prejudice were low, $b = .4938$, $t(255) = 6.99$, $p = .000$, compared to when they were high, $b = .2899$, $t(255) = 4.76$, $p = .000$. A depiction of this interaction can be found in Figure 2. High prejudice attributions weakened the indirect effect of victimization on internalizing problems, through CSB. The indirect effects at different levels of CSB can be seen in Table 5.

We also examined whether attributions of prejudice moderated the relation between victimization and internalizing problems, but there was no significant moderation. There was also no significant moderation by attributions of prejudice between CSB and internalizing problems. Additionally, to further examine whether the moderating effect of prejudice attributions could be explained by minority status, a t-test was conducted comparing white adolescents to minority adolescents on attributions of prejudice. Results indicated no differences in the endorsement of prejudice attributions between minority students and White students. Minority status was also checked for its moderating effect between victimization and CSB, but being from a minority group did not moderate how victimization and CSB were related.

Discussion

Research on child and adolescent peer experiences has established that peer victimization is concurrently and longitudinally associated with internalizing problems like depression, anxiety, and poor perceived self-worth (Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003; Olweus, 1994). Similar to past research, the current study also found that youth who self-reported being picked on by peers also reported more depression, social anxiety, and lower self-worth. Thus, we sought to understand the underlying process of victimization leading to maladjustment outcomes.

Previous research has also investigated the mechanisms that may explain how victimization and internalizing problems are related and has consistently found associations among victimization, the attributional process of characterological self-blame (CSB), and internalizing problems (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Graham & Juvonen, 1997; Schacter, White, Chang & Juvonen, 2015). CSB is a critical self-referent attribution that negative events are internally caused, unchangeable, and uncontrollable. Blaming one's internal characteristics for failures and other negative experiences puts adolescents at a higher risk for internalizing symptoms such as depression, loneliness, negative self-worth, and anxiety (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Graham & Juvonen, 1997; Schacter, White, Chang & Juvonen, 2015). Thus, a primary goal of the present study was to replicate past findings that CSB may explain how victimization relates to internalizing problems. Consistent with our hypothesis, the present study found that CSB partly explained the relation between victimization and internalizing problems. Blaming internal characteristics that are uncontrollable and unchangeable as the cause of victimization

may explain why these adolescents are more depressed and anxious and also have lower self-worth.

Replication of this finding is important because critical self-referent attributions, such as CSB, can inappropriately lead to learned helplessness as well as deficits in motivation and cognition (Abramson, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989). It is also important to acknowledge that not only may CSB come from continued victimization by peers, but CSB may also contribute to later negative peer experiences (Prinstein, Cheah & Guyer, 2005; Schacter et al., 2015). Thus, there is concern that CSB and victimization may reciprocally contribute to each other over time.

Another primary goal of the study was to examine factors that may disrupt the association of victimization with CSB. Past research has found that victimization and CSB may differ in their association based on whether youth are minority students and by the diversity of their schools. Graham et al. (2009) found victimization was less associated with CSB when adolescents were members of a numerical minority group in low diversity schools compared to minority students in more diverse schools. Graham et al. speculated that minority students in low diversity schools may be more likely to blame prejudice of the perpetrators instead of themselves, protecting their mental health in the face of victimization. Thus, the current study examined if perceived marginalization, in terms of low subjective socioeconomic status, and prejudice attributions moderated the relation between victimization and CSB.

First, results suggested that feeling poorer than schoolmates did not weaken the link between victimization and CSB. It may be that subjective socioeconomic status is not salient to youth in their peer interactions and does not weaken or strengthen how victimization is related to self-blame. Perhaps, SES only becomes an important and salient aspect of self in adolescence (Goodman, Huang, Schafer-Kalkhoff & Adler, 2007; Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same & Richeson,

2017). Identity formation starts from childhood and continues throughout adulthood, but it becomes one of the most critical psychological tasks during adolescence as youth experience and resolve identity crisis (Erikson, 1968). It may be that our participants have just begun their identity exploration and did not yet have SES as part of a salient identity this early in adolescence. Moreover, a longitudinal study found correlations between yearly reports of SSS increased overtime (Goodman et al., 2007), suggesting that with age the perception and internalization of socioeconomic status stabilize. It is possible that SSS could become a moderator between victimization and attributional styles later in adolescence once youth attain a more secure understanding of one's identity, including their internalized socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, we found that subjective social status was correlated with reports of family income (for those who reported) suggesting that SSS may have some validity in this sample.

Another possible explanation for why feeling poorer than peers did not moderate the relation between victimization and CSB is the limited range in SES of our sample. Past literature suggests that the relation of victimization and SES depends on a broader social context of inequality. Due et al. (2009) examined the effect of socioeconomic status on exposure to bullying during adolescence. Concurrent with the majority of the past findings, they found a significant positive association between socioeconomic disadvantage and the risk of being a victim. However, they also found that the overall economic inequality of the larger environment (e.g., school, country) exacerbated the risk of being a victim of bullying. The results indicated that a 10% increase in income inequality at the national level (Gini coefficient) led to 34% increase in the prevalence of bullying in a country (e.g. between Slovenia [28.4%] and Portugal [38.5%]). Similarly, an increase in economic disparity at the school level was also associated with an increased chance of being victimized. Large differences in the prevalence of bullying across

countries and schools based on income disparity indicate that peer victimization is affected by the surrounding social context. Considering that all three schools from which participants were recruited from were private schools, it is highly likely that most participants came from middle-class households. However, in this sample, perceived SES was still linked to victimization. It is feasible that this association may even be stronger in schools that were more diverse in SES.

We also explored if victimization and SSS would interact such that youth who were victimized and perceived themselves to be poorer relative to classmates would make more attributions of prejudice. We did not find this to be the case. As mentioned earlier, this may be due to youth's premature identity that is still early in its development. As children develop and their socioeconomic status-based identity stabilizes, it may become more strongly correlated with prejudice attributions.

Finally, we explored prejudice attributions as a moderator of the relation between victimization and CSB. We found that attributing the cause of negative peer experiences to the prejudice of the perpetrators decreased the relation of victimization with CSB. Thus, the indirect effect of victimization on internalizing problems through CSB was stronger for youth who made prejudice attributions at low levels. In this way, it seems that prejudice weakened the maladaptive cycle of victimization, CSB, and internalizing problems. This finding adds empirical support for Graham et al.'s (2009) speculation regarding the adaptive effects of attributing the cause of negative social experiences to others' prejudice. Additionally, these findings align with the attributional ambiguity perspective (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, Kaiser & McCoy, 2003) which argues that attributions of prejudice externalize the blame, minimizing personal responsibility, self-blame, and emotional pain. Youth may conclude that their victimization is an

act of injustice and a moral wrongdoing, and thus attribute victimization to others' prejudice protects youth from blaming themselves.

This is not to say that prejudice attributions are harmless. In the current sample, attributions of prejudice were positively correlated with social anxiety, suggesting that prejudice attributions may also co-occur with worries about others' judgements and potential internalization of negative judgements into negative self-perceptions. Some argue that the consequences of being aware of discrimination could be worse than the consequences of discrimination itself because the victims could internalize the stigmas and the prejudicial beliefs, leading to negative self-esteem and self-evaluations and greater depressive symptoms (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Goffman, 1963; Munford, 1994). So, although attributions of prejudice may protect youth from self-blaming, these youth may still face internalizing problems.

Finally, exploratory analyses found that there were several gender differences to note. Overall, males reported fewer internalizing problems than females, in line with the larger literature (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Leadbeater, Kuperminc, Blatt & Hertzog, 1999; Lewinsohn, Zibarg, Seeley, Lewinsohn & Sack, 1997; Crawford, Cohen, Midlarsky & Brook, 2001). Boys were also more likely to attribute negative peer experiences to the prejudice of the provocateur. Concordantly, boys' attributions of prejudice were correlated with both victimization and CSB at a significantly greater magnitude than girls'. Past literature has consistently found boys to exhibit higher levels of social dominance orientation which has been found to be strongly correlated with prejudice towards various social groups such as racial/ethnic groups and sexual minority groups (Akrami, Ekehammar & Araya, 2000; Ekehammar, Akrami & Araya, 2000; Whitley & Egisdottir, 2000). Concurrently, boys also have reported greater level of explicit prejudice towards outgroups (Ekehammar, Akrami & Araya, 2001). It may be that

because boys tend to endorse prejudice more, boys are more likely to notice and blame others' prejudice as well. Based on these results, gender was explored as another moderator of the mediation analyses, but it did not affect the hypothesized models. Results imply that while boys and girls may differ in their endorsement of prejudice attributions, prejudice attributions similarly decrease how victimization is related to CSB.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the present study should be noted. One limitation is that all participants were recruited from religiously affiliated private schools. This may limit the generalizability of our findings to youth who attend non-religious schools. Religion can play a critical role shaping attributional style and how one makes sense of world. For instance, Christian beliefs promote a dispositional attribution style, believing crimes to be a product of the offender's character not of the circumstance (Grasmick & McGill, 1994). However, Christianity's influence on the attributions regarding everyday occurrences such as peer interactions has yet to be examined. It may be useful to replicate these findings in secular schools.

Additionally, our sample consisted predominantly of White/Caucasian students. Nonetheless, racial and ethnic minorities in America were also the numerical minority groups in each school, which has allowed us to examine attributions in the context of inequality. However, and of note, post hoc comparisons did not find that minority students were more likely to endorse prejudice attributions. Although minority participants and White participants did not differ significantly on our variables of interest, including attributions of prejudice, it may be that more group differences would be observed in more racially and ethnically diverse schools. For instance, in a more diverse school, the likelihood of the provocateur or victim being a member of

a minority group is higher. Furthermore, we may observe other group differences beyond race and ethnicity in schools with a more pluralistic composition of religion, sexual orientation, and culture.

We also speculate that lack of heterogeneity in the sample's SES might be why we failed to find any effects of SSS in our proposed models. Our sample of private school students most likely came from family of similar socioeconomic standing. The context of socioeconomic inequality may not have been salient enough in the current study. In an environment with a greater socioeconomic diversity, we may find differences in socioeconomic standing to be a more salient factor in youth's lives that can also influence their interpretation of everyday peer interaction.

Moreover, it is worthwhile to note that we did not specify what the prejudice was about in the attribution item that assessed it. Considering how attributions of prejudice correlated with neither minority status nor SSS, each participant was likely referring back to whatever he or she might have felt stigmatized or marginalized for. Perhaps future studies should ask participants what they believe the provocateur was being prejudiced about.

An additional limitation of the present study deals with the methodology used. This was a cross-sectional study so we cannot speak to the longitudinal associations among variables and the order of change. It may be that internalizing problems drive CSB and that CSB leads to more victimization. Alternatively, it may also be that the tendency to self-blame predicts both peer victimization and internalizing problems. Future longitudinal work could investigate how change in these variables predict to each other over time. Additionally, future experimental designs could target one of these variables and see if it leads to change in the others.

Finally, it is likely that our results were inflated due to shared method variance, as all data were collected through self-reports. This, however, does not discount the validity of self-reported measures. The principal aim of the current study was to investigate adolescents' subjective perception and interpretation of their experiences, which can only be gathered via self-reports. Moreover, subjective experiences were found to be a better predictor for psychological well-being (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Graham & Juvonen, 1998). It will, however, be valuable for future research to utilize both self-reports and peer nominations of victimization and compare the two reports. For instance, the attributions of youth that are reported by peers as a victim but do not self-identify as a victim may be different from attributions of youth who are not nominated by peers as a victim but self-identify as victims. In addition, those that are both peer-nominated and self-report as a victim may demonstrate a different attributional style in a peer provocation situation.

To conclude, the current study demonstrated that characterological self-blame accounts for some of the relation of victimization with internalizing problems, but that attributions of prejudice weaken this process. It is crucial that we further our understanding of the underlying mechanisms of how victimization may increase maladjustment and try to better understand the conditions that strengthen and weaken this cycle. Although we found evidence for protective feature of prejudice attributions, blaming others' prejudice also encompasses risks of internalizing others' negative beliefs. Therefore, rather than focusing on externalizing the blame to prejudice in place of self-blame, we suggest that it may be helpful for victimized youth to explore other attributions for provocation and help them to refrain from blaming themselves.

Table 1.

Factor Loadings of the Items Ratings to Hypothetical Victimization

Items	CSB	BSB	External	R²
1. If I were a cooler kid, this wouldn't happen to me.	.751***			.475***
2. This happened to me because of how I look.	.846***			.733***
3. This happened to me because I can't stay out of trouble.	.207***			.102***
4. This happened to me because of my race or ethnic background.	.255***			.144***
5. This happened to me because I'm poorer than my classmates.	.415***			.321***
6. I shouldn't have been there.		.675***		.665***
7. I should have been more careful		.684***		.560***
8. I was at the wrong place at the wrong time.		.667***		.613***
9. These kids were in a bad mood.		0	.525***	.302***
10. These kids pick on everybody.		0	.878***	.809***
11. These kids are just mean.		0	.817***	.665***
12. These kids are prejudiced.		0	.466***	.182***
<i>Correlations among Factors</i>				
Factor	1	2	3	
1. CSB	1.000			
2. BSB	.591***	1.000		
3. External	.304***	.450***	1.000	
<i>Freed Correlations among Unique Factors</i>				
$\rho (E2, E7)$	-.139***			
$\rho (E5, E10)$.137***			

Table 2.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Differences Amongst Variables by Gender

Variable	Total			Male			Female			t	df
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n		
Age	13.59	.65	266	13.60	.63	99	13.59	.66	164	.172	261
Vic	.22	.15	281	1.82	.71	108	1.71	.61	167	1.36	273
CSB	.25	.13	281	1.82	.60	107	1.91	.60	168	-1.18	273
Prej	2.30	1.09	269	2.46	1.30	103	2.19	1.05	160	2.01*	261
Glob SW	2.99	.70	279	3.12	.61	107	2.92	.73	166	2.42*	271
Dep	9.51	6.45	275	8.27	5.69	105	10.11	6.69	164	-2.33*	267
Soc Anx	45.78	15.08	270	42.26	13.51	102	47.91	15.44	154	-3.01**	254
SSS	-.004	.85	278	.08	.74	105	-.04	.89	167	1.22	270

Note. Vic = Victimization; CSB = Characterological Self-Blame; Prej = Prejudice Attribution; Glob SW = Global Self-Worth; Dep = Depression; Soc Anx = Social Anxiety; SSS = Subjective Social Status.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3.
Correlations Amongst Variables

	n	Mean	SD	Age	Vic	CSB	Prej	Glob SW	Dep	Soc Anx	SSS
Age	266	13.59	.65	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vic	281	.22	.15	.148*	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
CSB	281	.25	.13	.102	.475***	1	-	-	-	-	-
Prej	269	2.30	1.09	-.142*	.225***	.349***	1	-	-	-	-
Glob SW	279	2.99	.70	-.189**	-.486***	-.446***	-.053	1	-	-	-
Dep	275	9.51	6.45	.107	.575***	.466***	.103	-.670***	1	-	-
Soc Anx	270	45.78	15.08	.102	.374***	.487***	.126*	-.469***	.491***	1	-
SSS	278	-.004	.85	-.035	-.167**	-.168**	-.005	.221***	-.233***	-.266***	1

Note. Vic = Victimization; CSB = Characterological Self-Blame; Prej = Prejudice Attribution; Glob SW = Global Self-Worth; Dep = Depression; Soc Anx = Social Anxiety; SSS = Subjective Social Status.

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

Table 4.
Correlations Amongst Variables by Gender

	Age	Vic	CSB	Prej	Glob SW	Dep	Soc Anx	SSS
Age	1	.056	.050	-.153	-.178*	.063	.149	-.139
Vic	.300**	1	.474***	.118	-.531***	.629***	.396***	-.207**
CSB	.191	.498***	1	.288***	-.494***	.507***	.477***	-.186*
Prej	-.127	.371***	.471***	1	-.004	.128	.020	.052
Glob SW	-.220*	-.464***	-.333***	-.211*	1	-.654***	-.486***	.192*
Dep	.208*	.542***	.376***	.146	-.677***	1	.502***	-.236**
Soc Anx	.022	.409***	.495***	.379***	-.374***	.419***	1	-.224**
SSS	.208*	-.111	-.115	-.153	.255**	-.196*	-.262**	1

Note. Correlations between variables for males are presented below the diagonal and correlations amongst the variables for females are presented above the diagonal. Bolded correlations indicate gender differences in the magnitude of the correlations.

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

Figure 1.
Mediation model with characterological self-blame mediating the association between victimization and internalizing problems

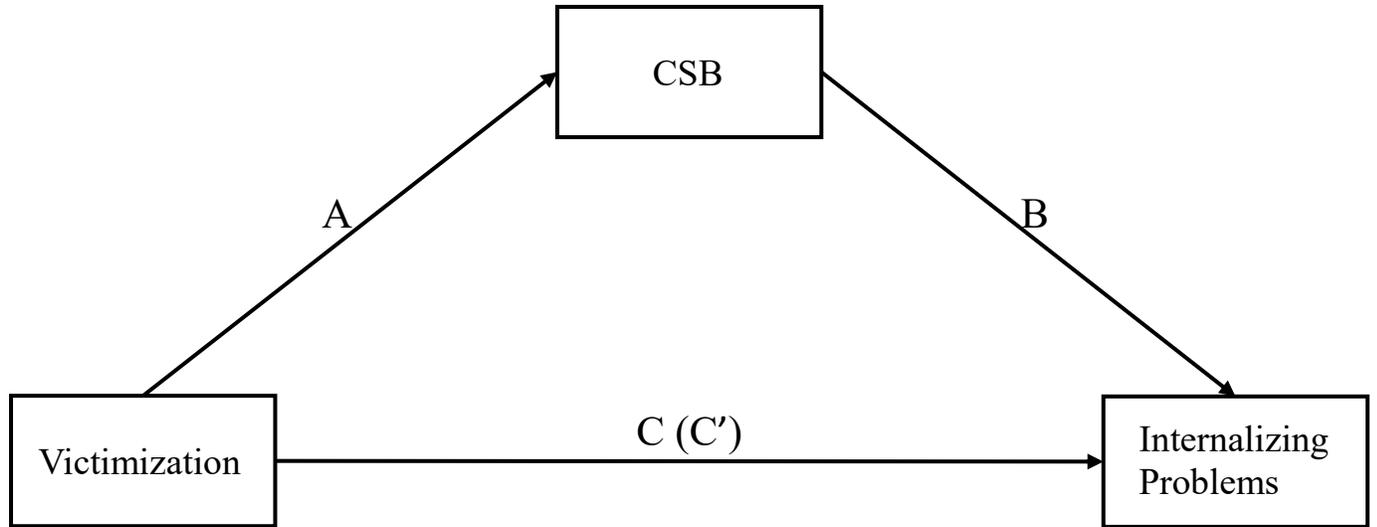


Figure 2.

Interaction of victimization and prejudice attributions predicting characterological self-blame

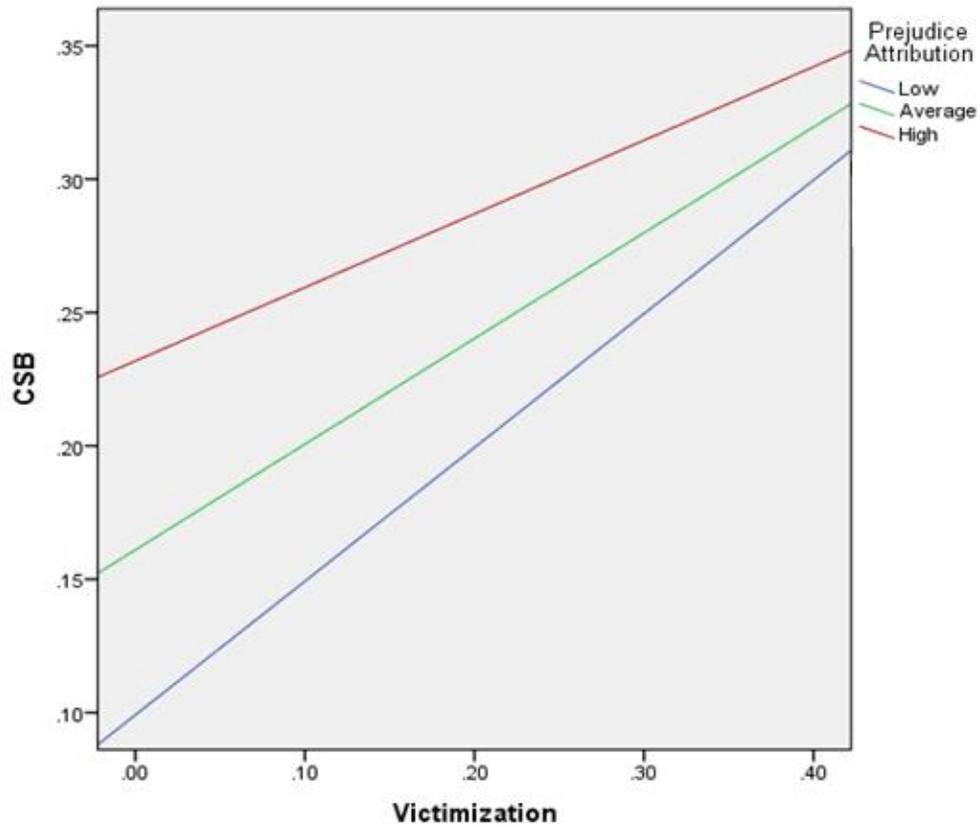


Table 5.

Conditional Indirect Effects of Victimization at Three Levels of Prejudice Attributions

Conditional Indirect Effects	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
Low Prejudice attribution			
Vic to Dep/GSW Via CSB	0.5	0.07	.3607, .6425***
Vic to SocAnx via CSB	0.53	0.07	.3845, .6729***
Medium Prejudice attribution			
Vic to Dep/GSW Via CSB	0.4	0.05	.3019, .4906***
Vic to SocAnx Via CSB	0.41	0.05	.3161, .5085***
High Prejudice attribution			
Vic to Dep/GSW Via CSB	0.28	0.06	.1546, .3971***
Vic to SocAnx Via CSB	0.28	0.06	.1568, .4017***

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Appendices

Appendix A

1. When is your birthday? _____
2. What is your grade level?
 - a. 1st
 - b. 2nd
 - c. 3rd
3. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other: _____
 - d. Prefer not to answer
4. Are your parents...
 - a. Married
 - b. Separated/ Divorced
 - c. Unmarried
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Other _____
 - f. Prefer not to answer
5. What are your parents' occupations?
Father: _____
Mother: _____
6. Which of the following beset describes your race? You may select more than one if applicable.
 - a. African American/Black
 - b. American Indian / Alaska Native
 - c. Asian
 - d. Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander
 - e. White/Caucasian

- f. Other Race _____
 - g. Prefer not to answer
7. What was your parents' income before taxes last year?
- a. Less than \$25,000
 - b. \$25,000 – \$34,999
 - c. \$35,000 – \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 – \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 – \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 – \$149,999
 - g. \$150,00 – \$199,999
 - h. \$200,000 or more
 - i. I don't know
 - j. I'd rather not say

Appendix B

THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO ME

Name _____ Grade _____

Teacher's Name _____

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age at school. How often do they happen to you at school?

EXAMPLE:

A. How often do you eat lunch at school?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

B. How often does your class go outside to play?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

1. How often does another kid give you help when you need it?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

2. How often do you get hit by another kid at school?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

3. How often do other kids leave you out on purpose when it is time to play or do an activity?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

4. How often does another kid yell at you and call you mean names?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

5. How often does another kid try to cheer you up when you feel sad or upset?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

6. How often does a kid who is mad at you try to get back at you by not letting you be in their group anymore?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

7. How often do you get pushed or shoved by another kid at school?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

8. How often does another kid do something that makes you feel happy?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

9. How often does a classmate tell lies about you to make other kids not like you anymore?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

10. How often does another kid kick you or pull your hair?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

11. How often does another kid say they won't like you unless you do what they want you to do?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

12. How often does another kid say something nice to you?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

13. How often does a kid try to keep others from liking you by saying mean things about you?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

14. How often does another kid say they will beat you up if you don't do what they want you to do?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

15. How often do other kids let you know that they care about you?

1 NEVER	2 ALMOST NEVER	3 SOMETIMES	4 ALMOST ALL THE TIME	5 ALL THE TIME
------------	----------------------	----------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

Appendix C

“What if this happened to you?”

Directions: This questionnaire describes different situations that could occur in your everyday life at school. Try to imagine that you are actually in these situations. After reading each story you will be asked to indicate your responses to each situation. You will do this by circling a number to indicate how much you agree with each statement. Let’s do a short story for practice.

PRACTICE
One day during math class, one of your classmates tells you that you are very smart.

What would you be **thinking** in this situation?

Practice items:

This person is nice.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not				Definitely would

This person said this because they are in a good mood.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not				Definitely would

Please make each rating without thinking about your other ratings. You can give a high rating of agreement to more than one statement.

The following vignettes will be included in the measure:

1. You are walking in the hallway toward your classroom. As you walk down the hall, someone that is passing by curses at you.
 2. You are sitting in class and the people behind you start talking badly about the way you look. They make some jokes and laugh.
 3. You are in class and the teacher calls on you to answer a question. After you give your response, you hear a classmate say “So stupid” under their breath. Your classmates laugh.
 4. You missed a class and you need to get notes about what you missed. A classmate says that they can let you borrow their notes, but someone stops them and says that they shouldn’t help you.
 5. There are some kids talking in the hall and you want to join the conversation. Every time you try to say something, someone interrupts or roll their eyes while you’re talking. They ignore everything you say.
 6. Several kids are going somewhere after school to hang out. You ask them if you can join them, but they say no.
-

Questions are formatted as follows:

There are some kids talking and you want to join the conversation. Every time you try to say something, someone interrupts or roll their eyes while you’re talking. They ignore everything you say.

What would you be **thinking** in this situation?

1. I shouldn’t have been there.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

2. If I were a cooler kid, this wouldn’t happen to me.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

3. This happened to me because of how I look.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

4. This happened to me because I can't stay out of trouble.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

5. These kids were in a bad mood.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

6. I should have been more careful.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

7. This happened to me because of my race or ethnic background.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

8. These kids pick on everybody.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

9. The kids are just mean.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

10. I was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

11. These kids are prejudiced.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

12. This happened to me because I'm poorer than my classmates.

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely would not			Definitely would	

Appendix D

“How I Feel”

ID: _____

Date: _____

Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or acted. Please check how much you have felt this way during the *past week*.

	During the past week...	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot
1	I did not feel like eating, I wasn't very hungry.				
2	I felt down and unhappy.				
3	I felt like I was too tired to do things.				
4	I didn't sleep as well as I usually sleep.				
5	I was happy.				
6	I felt lonely, like I didn't have any friends.				
7	I felt like kids I know were not friendly or that they didn't want to be with me.				
8	I had a good time.				
9	I felt sad.				
10	I felt people didn't like me.				
11	It was hard to get started doing things.				

Appendix E

“In social situations...”

ID: _____ Date: _____

Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or acted. Please check how much each statement is true for you.

		Not at all	Hardly ever	Some times	Most of the time	All the time
1	I have a hard time answering questions in class.					
2	I get nervous when speaking or reading aloud in front of a group.					
3	I have a fear of speaking in front of a group or multiple people.					
4	I'm scared to speak in front of the class.					
5	I get nervous and can't ask questions during class.					
6	I get nervous when someone is watching me doing something.					
7	I worry about what other children say about me.					
8	I worry about what other kids think of me.					
9	I feel that other kids talk about me behind my back.					
10	If I get into an argument with another kid, I worry that he or she won't like me.					
11	I worry about being teased.					
12	I'm afraid to invite others to do things with me because they might say no.					
13	I feel that kids are making fun of me.					
14	I avoid social situations.					
15	In a social situation, I feel scared.					
16	I'm afraid to eat where multiple people are like the school cafeteria.					
17	I leave early when in a situation involving multiple people.					
18	I fear places with multiple people, I go home early.					
19	I start sweating or my heart beats faster when I have to attend a social gathering.					

20	I get nervous when I talk to new kids.					
21	I get nervous when I talk to kids I don't know very well.					

Appendix F

ID #: _____ Date: _____

General Instructions

On these questionnaires you are going to fill out, we want to know what you really think about each question; so answer as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. All information will be kept private and confidential, which means that your name will not be on any of the forms, and nobody will know how you answered any of the questions. Read carefully and try to answer every question. If you have any questions as you go along, please contact us at jyang41@crimson.ua.edu.

Directions for the "What I'm Like" Questionnaire

On this questionnaire, we are going to ask you to mark the box that describes you the best. The following are step-by-step instructions for how to answer every question.

1. Look at the two statements in the example:

"Some teenagers like to go to movies." or "Other teenagers prefer sports events."

2. Decide which statement is more like you.

Are you the type of person who would rather go to movies, **OR** do you prefer sports events?

3. After you choose one of the two statements (either the one on the left side or the one on the right side), you should decide how true the statement is for you.

Is the statement "Sort of True" for you **OR** "Really True" for you.

4. Mark the box that you think best fits you.

Only select ONE answer. You should have only ONE box checked for each number.

Remember this is not a test; just choose which statement is like you most of the time.

Example

(a)

Really true for me	Sort of true for me					Sort of true for me	Really true for me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers like to go to movies	BUT	Other teenagers prefer sports events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1.

Really true for me	Sort of true for me					Sort of true for me	Really true for me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers find it hard to make friends	BUT	For other teenagers it is pretty easy		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.

Really true for me	Sort of true for me					Sort of true for me	Really true for me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers are often disappointed with themselves	BUT	Other teenagers are pretty pleased with themselves		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.

Really true for me	Sort of true for me					Sort of true for me	Really true for me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers have a lot of friends	BUT	Other teenagers do not have very many friends		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.

Really true for me	Sort of true for me					Sort of true for me	Really true for me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers do not like the way they are leading their life	BUT	Other teenagers do like the way they are leading their life		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.

Really true for me	Sort of true for me					Sort of true for me	Really true for me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers are very hard to like	BUT	Other teenagers are really easy to like		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.

Really true for me

Sort of true for me

Some teenagers are happy with themselves most of the time

BUT

Other teenagers are often not happy with themselves

Sort of true for me

Really true for me

7.

Really true for me

Sort of true for me

Some teenagers are popular with others their age

BUT

Other teenagers are not very popular

Sort of true for me

Really true for me

8.

Really true for me

Sort of true for me

Some teenagers like the kind of person they are

BUT

Other teenagers often wish they were someone else

Sort of true for me

Really true for me

9.

Really true for me

Sort of true for me

Some teenagers feel that they are socially accepted

BUT

Other teenagers wish that more people their age accepted them

Sort of true for me

Really true for me

10.

Really true for me

Sort of true for me

Some teenagers are very happy being the way they are

BUT

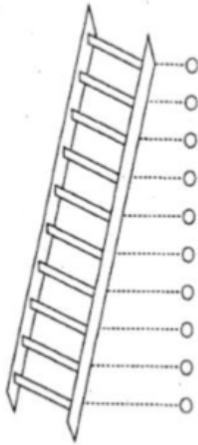
Other teenagers wish they were different

Sort of true for me

Really true for me

The Ladders

Top= tallest people in your school



Bottom = shortest people in your school

Imagine that this ladder shows where people fit in your school.

How **TALL** are you compared with the rest of the kids in your school?

Fill in the circle that best represents where you would be on this ladder.

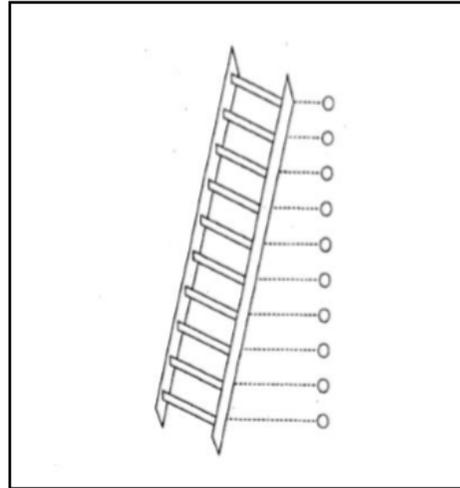
If you think you're short, you would fill in the circle closer to the bottom.

If you think you're tall, you would fill in the circle closer to the top.

Assume that the ladder pictures how American society is set up.

- At the top of the ladder are families who are the best off—they have the most money, big houses, and the fanciest cars.
- At the bottom of the ladder are families who are the worst off—they have the least money, small houses, and boring cars.

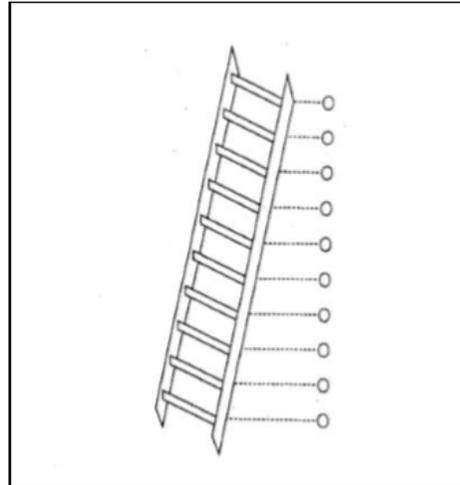
Now think about the families of the kids at your school. Please tell us where you think the families of kids in your school would be on this ladder compared to other families in America. **Fill in the circle that best represents where they would be on this ladder.**



Now assume that the ladder is a way of representing your school.

- At the top of the ladder are the people in your school who are the best off—they have the most money, big houses, and the fanciest cars.
- At the bottom of the ladder are the people in your school who are the worst off—they have the least money, small houses, and boring cars.

Now think about you in your school. Please tell us where you think you would be on this ladder compared to other kids in your school. **Fill in the circle that best represents where you would be on this ladder.**



2. Mark the box that you think best describes your family’s income relative to your peers at school.

Less money	Same							More money
<input type="checkbox"/>								

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



The University of Alabama
801 University Blvd
Tuscaloosa AL
TEL: 205 348 6457
FAX:

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: November 28, 2018
TO: Yang, Joo, Psychology
Conners, Frances, Psychology, McDonald, Kristina, Psychology
Graham, Jeanelle, MPH, Research Compliance Specialist, FB Non-Medical
FROM:
PROTOCOL TITLE: Adolescent Experiences in the Peer Group
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 18-08-1415
APPROVAL PERIOD: Approval Date: September 20, 2018 Expiration Date: September 19, 2019

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Adolescent Experiences in the Peer Group. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under University of Alabama's Federal Wide Assurance 00004939 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under Committee's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

Graham, Jeanelle

Graham, Jeanelle

Approval Period: September 20, 2018 through September 19, 2019
Review Type: FULLBOARD
IRB Number: 01