

The Bullying Attribution Scale: An initial examination of factor structure and construct validity

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Samantha Manring
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Abstract

Peer victimization is a serious problem that continues to deserve the attention of researchers. It is a group process in which most children participate, and each participant in this process (e.g., victims, bullies, bystanders) is at risk for maladjustment. It is imperative that we identify the risk factors that perpetuate peer victimization experiences, and understanding how children explain the reasons behind this phenomenon may shed light on why peer victimization is sustained over time. Few quantitative studies, however, have examined the specific reasons children (regardless of victim status) offer for why peer victimization occurs. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature by identifying the factor structure and evaluating the psychometric properties of the Bullying Attribution Scale in a sample of 3rd and 4th grade elementary school students.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed a 3-factor solution, and factors were labeled *Victim Otherness*, *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*, and *Bully-Victim Conflict*. Internal consistency of the factors was good to adequate. *Victim Otherness* positively predicted self-reported bullying and internalizing symptoms at a single time point, and teacher-reported bullying over time. *Bully-Victim Conflict* positively predicted peer-reported bullying and negatively predicted peer-reported victimization over time. Several of these longitudinal associations depended on initial levels of self-reported peer victimization. Children identified as victims were more likely to endorse *Victim Otherness* than children uninvolved in bullying. Few other mean-level differences were found when examining attributions by bully-victim status, suggesting that children are generally at a consensus when ascribing reasons for why peer victimization occurs.

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I. Introduction

School bullying is an international public health problem. Over the past several decades the field has amassed a considerable body of research aimed at understanding the causes and consequences of, and effective prevention practices for, school bullying. Interestingly, scholars have paid less attention to the cognitive processes that may influence how school children make sense of or respond to bullying episodes, or the extent to which those processes influence their involvement in bullying as a victim, bully, or bystander. The focus of the current investigation is on understanding the attributions that children make for why other children are targets of peer victimization. To date, the measurement of children's bullying attributions has relied predominately on qualitative methods and focus groups and through hypothetical vignettes depicting negative peer interactions characterized by ambiguous intent. Moreover, studies utilizing hypothetical vignettes have asked children to respond as if they were the target of the provocation, which limits the generalizability of these attributions to the individual. The current investigation is an initial evaluation of the factor structure and psychometric properties of the Bullying Attribution Scale (BAS), a child report measure developed to assess the attributions that children make for why other children are bullied. The primary goal of this study was to identify the factor structure of the BAS and establish the reliability and concurrent and predictive validity of BAS factors. Also of interest to the current investigation was whether children's endorsement of different attributions varied depending on their bully-victim status. The following section consists of a review of peer victimization risk factors as well as theories underlying peer victimization as they relate to children's attributions. A more thorough examination of various measurement techniques previously used to assess children's attributions, as well as how prior investigations informed the development of the BAS, is presented in the methods section.

Prevalence and Consequences of Peer Victimization

While the concept of bullying has evolved beyond traditional physical harassment to include different types (e.g., verbal, relational) and modes (e.g., cyber) of victimization, three key features distinguish bullying from broader acts of aggression: intentionality, repetition, and a power imbalance (Olweus, 1993). In general, it is estimated that 17-30% of youth in the United States experience some degree of peer victimization at school (Flannery et al., 2016). Approximately 10-15% of elementary school students and 5-10% of middle or junior high school students experience chronic peer victimization (Goldbaum, Craig, Pepler, & Connolly, 2003; Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002; Olweus, 1993; Solberg & Olweus, 2003), although prevalence estimates tend to vary greatly across studies due in part to the challenge of reliably identifying victims and bullies in research (J. C. M. Cole, Cornell, & Sheras, 2006; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Rates of victimization also appear to differ across developmental stages; it is thought to be widespread in elementary school, peak around middle school, and then gradually decline from early to late adolescence (Nylund, Bellmore, Nishina, & Graham, 2007). Yet, despite the fact that bullying and harassment from peers is a relatively common experience, peer victimization is not normative in the sense that it is harmless or leaves few lasting effects on involved children. Rather, it is a complex problem embedded in an ever-changing social scene that poses serious long-term consequences.

By its very definition, peer victimization is a group process in which most children occupy a certain role (e.g., bully, victim, defender; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). The maladaptive outcomes associated with involvement in bullying are well documented in a growing literature. Elementary school victims, for example, commonly report higher rates of depression and anxiety relative to their non-victimized peers (e.g., Hodges

& Perry, 1999), and such problems often extend well beyond childhood into adolescence and adulthood (Bierman, Kalvin, & Heinrichs, 2015; Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011). Some evidence suggests that both bullying and victim status are associated with future suicidality, especially for those youth with comorbid psychopathology (Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010). There is also evidence that a subgroup of peer victimized children will go on to become bullies themselves during late adolescence (Barker, Arseneault, Brendgen, Fontaine, & Maughan, 2008; Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014).

Bullies are at risk for a host of future externalizing difficulties such as criminality and substance use (Kim, Catalano, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2011; Sourander et al., 2011). Children who are both victims of school bullying/peer harassment and who act aggressively toward their peers are often called *aggressive-victims* or *bully-victims*. This subgroup is smaller but more stable over time and at greater risk for negative outcomes compared to passive victims, bullies, or uninvolved children (Lester, Cross, Shaw, & Dooley, 2012; O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009; Schwartz, Proctor, & Chien, 2001). Not surprisingly, bully-victims are among the most highly rejected of all children (Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2001), which renders them especially vulnerable to enduring victimization (Boivin, Hymel, & Burkowski, 1995; Schwartz, McFadyen-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1999). Furthermore, even in the absence of direct personal experience with peer victimization, simply witnessing peer harassment has been shown to increase children's feelings of anxiety, school dislike, and other emotional maladjustment (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005; Werth, Nickerson, Aloe, & Swearer, 2015).

Victim and aggressor status tends to remain relatively stable across development (Cillessen & Lansu, 2015; Ladd, Ettekal, & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2017; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984), and patterns of peer victimization may become self-perpetuating

with time (Buhs et al., 2006). Chronic peer victimization can contribute to a global belief that members of the peer group are hostile, which may then lead peer victimized children to respond negatively to the behavior of peer group members, even when the intent of that behavior is ambiguous, which in turn sustains or exacerbates peer victimization experiences (Salmivalli & Isaacs, 2005). There also seems to be a gradual cognitive shift in the peer group's perception of the victim, as children begin to justify peer harassment by placing blame on the peer victimized child (Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003).

Peer victimization has received significant attention in recent decades, and uncovering factors reliably associated with increased risk for victimization has been central to this body of work. It is important to understand the processes that contribute to peer victimization because the effects of peer victimization extend beyond the perpetrator and victim to include members of the peer group. Hence, identifying individual characteristics of victims and bullies, as well as characteristics of the peer group, that influence the course of children's peer victimization experiences is key.

Risk Factors for Peer Victimization

In general, individual risk factors for peer victimization represent some deviation from the norm. Deviant behaviors, or those behaviors that stand out in relation to social norms, tend to generate stronger reactions from peer group members relative to behaviors that are more in line with the behaviors of the social group (Blanton & Burkley, 2008). For instance, some researchers have found that the collective social competence of the group may moderate an individual child's risk for peer victimization. Leadbeater, Hoglund & Woods (2003) found that first graders with higher initial levels of internalizing symptoms reported more victimization by second grade, but only if they were surrounded by classmates with high levels of social competence. Likewise,

peer victimization is more strongly associated with maladjustment when it occurs in orderly, as opposed to disorderly, classrooms (Bellmore, Witkow, Graham, & Juvonen, 2004). Moreover, children that are victimized in isolation (i.e., are the only victim they know) fare worse than victimized children that are frequently in the presence of other victims (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005). In fact, feelings of humiliation decrease when victims witness other children getting victimized around the same time they are being harassed.

Peer harassment may be a way for peers to send a message to victims that they are violating social norms and are therefore disliked. In other words, deviance may be constructed as a justification for victimization (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011; Lahelma, 2004; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). Behaviors that peers consider inappropriate or provocative have been shown to elicit victimization, although a child's *response to* victimization may also put them at risk for continued abuse (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz, 1996). If a child's response to harassment is entertaining to peers, the behavior of the bully and bystanders may be reinforced. Nonetheless, victims' attempts to thwart peer abuse are often ineffectual and result in submission, making them particularly vulnerable to those seeking social dominance or status (Juvonen & Gross, 2005; Veenstra et al., 2007).

Bullying often stops when members of the peer group intervene in bullying situations, but relatively few children occupy the role of active defenders. Thus, whether or not peers are willing to help a victim represents an important factor that can alter a child's peer victimization experience. Understanding the social cognitions that influence peers' behavior and felt responsibility toward the victim in bullying situations may inform intervention efforts seeking to affect change in bystander behavior. Similarly, victims' construal or appraisal of peer victimization experiences may too influence the course and outcomes of their peer victimization.

Relatively little is known about how children interpret and/or apply meaning to experiences involving peer victimization. The key interest of the current study is to assess children's reasons for why peer victimization occurs through a newly created attribution measure. Quantitative questionnaires aimed at identifying specific characteristics of the child or bully-victim relationship that facilitate peer victimization from a child's perspective are especially limited, and thus this measure aims to fill this gap in the literature. The following section describes several different theoretical approaches and measurement strategies of previous investigations of children's attributions for negative or hostile peer interactions.

Attributions for Peer Victimization

Given that individuals often seek to understand the preconditions that facilitate the events or outcomes in their lives, especially the adverse ones, it makes sense that children would be motivated to understand the reasons underlying peer victimization (Weiner, 1985). Seeking justification for injustices, both felt and observed, is a common human experience. Whether a child experiences peer victimization as an active participant or passive bystander, most children will encounter a situation involving bullying and then presumably attribute a cause to that encounter. Broadly speaking, reasons often given by children break down into three categories: internal (i.e., blaming the victim), external (i.e., blaming the bully or situation), or both (i.e., blaming the bully-victim relationship). The different mechanisms or theories that could promote the development of certain attributions are reviewed below.

a. Content-based Attributions

Predominantly assessed through qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups, a number of studies have directly asked children to provide reasons for why children are victimized by peers. Several themes emerge from studies interviewing children on this subject.

During interviews in peer groups of elementary school students, the most common reason offered for bullying was the deviance, or “different-ness”, of the bullied child (e.g., the victim does not behave as he *should*; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). When adolescents were asked why they thought they were getting bullied, Smith and colleagues found that victim characteristics (e.g., physical characteristics, being different) was the most common response, followed by aspects of the bully-victim relationship (e.g., bully doesn’t like the victim, arguments) and bully-related characteristics (e.g., bully does it to feel better, for revenge). Additionally, girls were more likely than boys to report bully-victim relationship issues as the source of their victimization (Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). In another study involving high-schoolers in Sweden, similar themes emerged when students were asked to reflect on why they thought children were bullied; victim's appearance, victim's behavior, bully characteristics (e.g., bullies think they are cool), social background (e.g., religion), and other (e.g., bad luck) were the most common responses provided by Swedish adolescents, respectively (Frisén, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). Adolescents from the same study were also asked why they thought some children bullied other children, and many indicated that the bully suffered from low self-esteem. Through the use of focus groups, Guerra, Williams, & Sadek (2011) found that students across elementary, middle, and high school consistently indicated that victims are weak, vulnerable, or “different” from their peers. In sum, victim-blame is often referenced when asking children to describe factors associated with becoming a target of peer victimization.

b. Attribution Theory

Despite decades of research on peer victimization, exploring causal attributions as a mechanism through which peer victimization leads to or perpetuates maladjustment represents a relatively recent endeavor. Prior to the last 20 years, research on causal attributions and their

relation to one's psychological functioning was mainly conducted in the context of achievement (Weiner, 1985) or sexual assault (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Weiner's (1985, 2006) theory of attribution proposed that a person determines the causality of an event depending on certain properties of that event. These properties, or "dimensions," include locus of control (i.e., whether the cause was internal or external to the person), stability, and controllability. Interpreting life events along these dimensions has implications for psychosocial adjustment; individuals who attribute negative events to internal, stable, and uncontrollable factors are at increased risk for the development or recurrence of depression (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989). It is also thought that a person tends to consistently make the same *type* of attribution across life events (i.e., they develop an attributional style), and individual differences in these styles may underlie problems in functioning (e.g., Anderson & Arnoult, 1985).

In one of the first investigations to apply attribution theory to peer victimization, Graham and Juvonen (1998) demonstrated that certain attributions, and more specifically certain kinds of self-blame, place bullied children at greater risk for internalizing problems. In their investigation, peer victimization attributions were separated into two categories: characterological self-blame (CSB) and behavioral self-blame (BSB). While both are considered internal attributions, CSB involves stable and uncontrollable characteristics (e.g., "because of who I am"), whereas BSB involves unstable and controllable characteristics (e.g., "because of something I did"). Due to the intimate and nonmalleable nature of CSB, this category of self-blame is considered a risk factor for more serious maladjustment. Using a hypothetical vignette, children imagined themselves as the victim in two scenarios depicting bullying and then rated the extent to which they agreed with statements describing attributions related to each scenario. Among the 6th and 7th graders that completed the measure, peer-victimized children who endorsed CSB in response to the

hypothetical vignettes reported more loneliness and social anxiety. It is worth noting that while CSB and BSB were highly correlated in this study, BSB explained little variance in adjustment outcomes when examined independently. Indeed, while several follow-up studies have found associations between CSB and negative outcomes, BSB has demonstrated few significant findings (Graham, Bellmore, & Mize, 2006).

Given a person's ability to modify their behavior in hopes of attaining better outcomes, it is presumed that BSB would be more adaptive following negative life events (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). However, BSB does not seem to predict adjustment benefits, which may be due to the uncertainty with which a child recognizes their behavior as being stable or under their control (Graham & Juvonen, 1998). For example, it is unclear if children who believe children are victimized due to their socially awkward behavior consider this reason to be permanent or subject to change. Thus, attributions along dimensions of stability or controllability need to be understood within a developmental framework (Fincham & Cain, 1986). Children begin to place more emphasis on stability in their causal explanations by late childhood or early adolescence, suggesting that the trait-like nature of attributional styles increases with age (D. A. Cole et al., 2008). Also, the gradual development of a more negative attributional style places children at risk for future maladjustment (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992). Among 4th and 5th graders, negative attributional styles were found to mediate the relation between verbal victimization and depressive symptoms (Gibb & Alloy, 2006). The tendency to perceive negative events as more stable with age (i.e., characterological self-blame), in combination with the tendency for peer victimization to increase around middle school, are reasons why it is important to understand how children interpret peer victimization experiences at an early age. Interventions

that aim to alter attributions may be more successful when children's maladaptive attributions are identified during a developmental window when attributions are less intractable.

c. Social Comparison Theory

Some argue that the contextual nature of an attribution, rather than the degree of stability or controllability, may shed more light on the variation in child adjustment outcomes (Dresel, Schober, & Ziegler, 2005). Based on the Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, and Clifford (2013) propose that peer victimized children use social comparisons to try to understand why they are the targets of peer victimization. Visconti and colleagues suggest that the *direction* of the social comparison is key when interpreting children's reactions to peer victimization (Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Clifford, 2013; Clifford, 2009). An upward social comparison, for example, indicates that a child believes he or she was victimized due to some inferior or undesirable trait. Downward social comparisons reflect "superiority beliefs" (e.g., one's harassment is the result of peer's jealousy), and horizontal comparisons indicate that the victim and the aggressor mutually dislike one another. The authors also argue that prior measures examining children's attributions have failed to assess positive personal characteristics (i.e., downward social comparisons) or mutual dislike (i.e., horizontal social comparisons). Among a sample of 3rd and 5th graders identified as having some experience with peer harassment, attributions reflecting upward social comparisons were associated with less peer acceptance, more loneliness, and lower self-esteem. Downward social comparisons were linked to lower levels of loneliness and greater peer acceptance. Mutual antipathy, a horizontal comparison, was associated with greater loneliness, but not acceptance or self-esteem. Although the majority of children implicated themselves in some way when offering reasons for their peer victimization, the authors acknowledged that other attributes that do not reflect social

comparison (i.e., external or contextual factors) may also play a role (Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Clifford, 2013; Clifford, 2009).

Visconti and colleagues also focused on the types of attributions children make as a means of coping. Coping, they argue, is influenced by how individuals process social information; after individuals evaluate various causal explanations for some event, they then evaluate the possible response options (i.e., coping). In a sample of 4th and 6th graders identified as at least being occasionally victimized, children's coping responses differed depending on their specific attributions for their peer victimization; in fact, differences were even found among those causal explanations reflecting upward social comparison (i.e., "being uncool" versus personal behavior). Children who believed their behavior caused their victimization were more likely to endorse retaliation and less likely to endorse problem solving as means of coping, whereas children who blamed themselves for being "uncool" were more likely to seek help from teachers and less likely to endorse nonchalant responses over the course of a school year (e.g., "I act like nothing happened"). The researchers argue that children who believe they *did something* to provoke their peers may not expect much sympathy or support and therefore feel retaliation is their only option. Children who feel "uncool" may not possess the intrapersonal resources (e.g., confidence) required to respond nonchalantly and instead seek protection from adults (Visconti, Sechler, & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2013).

Taken together, it appears that children who make upward social comparisons, such as being "uncool", to explain their victimization are at risk of maladjustment. In the development of their quantitative measure, Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, and Clifford (2013) discuss an attempt to capture the "spirit" of numerous qualitative reports from children describing different physical characteristics as reasons for their victimization. The resulting items focus on a victim's general

“differentness” or being “uncool” rather identifying specific features. Given the consequences of making victim-specific negative attributions, however, it would be important to know what *specifically* children believe makes a peer inferior in order to better tailor intervention efforts (e.g., internalizing symptoms, externalizing behaviors, physical appearance, etc.). A goal of the current study, described below, was to develop a measure that addressed this limitation.

d. Social Information Processing Models

Some have encouraged researchers to move beyond more traditional attribution theories and apply social information processing (SIP) models to children’s reasons for bullying (Prinstein, Cheah, & Guyer, 2005). The SIP model suggests that children’s social behaviors are functions of various cognitive steps, including encoding and interpreting social cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994). It is during the interpretation step that a child deduces the intent of his or her peer’s behavior. Hence, the interpretation step can be thought of as an attributional process and is particularly important given that it is assumed to dictate the behavioral response. Aggressive children, for example, tend to perceive hostile motives behind ambiguous social behaviors. Thus, a hostile attribution bias increases the likelihood that a child will respond to provocative peers with aggression (Crick & Dodge, 1994). This bias is thought to place those children specifically identified as “bully-victims” at risk for continuing victimization, as nonaggressive victims often do not show a tendency to attribute hostile intent (Camodeca, Goossens, Meerum Terwogt, & Schuengel, 2002).

Indeed, the SIP model may be limited in its ability to attribute social deficits to aggression much beyond bully-victims (see Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). Among 8-11-year-old elementary students in Italy, Gini (2006), for example, failed to find social cognitive deficits (including the ability to perspective-take) among children identified as bullies. In fact,

bullies did not demonstrate any deficits in the ability to detect moral emotions in others via hypothetical scenarios. This indicates that while bullies may underappreciate the emotional consequences of their behavior, they are able to at least cognitively grasp emotion in others' mental states. Victims, on the other hand, were more likely to demonstrate difficulties in social cognition (Gini, 2006). It is important to note that studies examining hostile intent biases in the context of children's bullying attributions have utilized hypothetical vignettes portraying broadly defined negative peer interactions (Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2013; Prinstein et al., 2005), as further described below.

e. Moral Disengagement

While there may be a general negative bias towards victims, the majority of children believe bullying is wrong and are sympathetic towards the victim (Rigby & Slee, 1991). However, because children often fail to intervene in bullying episodes, the social norms to which children adhere may not be reflective of the private attitudes they hold (Juvonen & Galván, 2008). Thus, children are likely motivated to reduce the tension that arises from the failure to act on one's values and conform to group norms. Moral disengagement (see Bandura, 1999) describes the cognitive restructuring often done to alleviate the discomfort that arises from being a participant or witness of immoral conduct, and it has been shown to be related to both bullying and the likelihood of defending the victim. A similar perspective, the Just World Theory, suggests that people are motivated to maintain a sense of justice in the world and thereby believe that people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980).

As previously mentioned, children may use a victim's "different-ness" as a basis for victimization (Guerra et al., 2011; Lahelma, 2004; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). This represents a form of moral disengagement as it diminishes empathy and attenuates a peer's

ability to identify with the victimized child (i.e., dehumanization; Bandura, 1999). This, in addition to the Just World Theory, may explain why victim-blaming is not only seen in bullies but uninvolved peers as well (Hara, 2002). For example, when asked what makes bullying stop, adolescents that were uninvolved in bullying were more likely than victims to indicate that peer harassment ends when the victim stands up for himself/herself, suggesting that peers with no personal experience of victimization believe victims are at least partly to blame for their plight (Frisén et al., 2007). Similarly, among a sample of middle schoolers asked to imagine being the target of victimization in a hypothetical vignette, Batanova, Espelage, and Rao (2014) found that boys who blamed themselves for their hypothetical victimization were less likely to indicate that they would intervene on behalf of other victims. However, this relationship was only true for boys with low levels of *actual* victimization, suggesting that children may attribute their lack of victimization to their own inherent characteristics while (perhaps unknowingly) faulting the victim (Batanova, Espelage, & Rao, 2014).

Attributing blame to the victim may also exonerate children from feeling any obligation to help (Bandura, 1999). Among 10-14-year-old Swedish children, Thornberg and Jungert (2014) found that victim attributions (i.e., children indicated how much they agreed with statements like “If people are weird, it is their own fault if they get bullied”) were positively associated with bullying and negatively associated with defending behavior. Diffusion of responsibility (e.g., assuming others will take responsibility) was also negatively associated with defending behavior. Boys tended to display higher overall levels of moral disengagement, but it is worth noting that this study relied solely on self-report data and constructs were measured at a single time point (Thornberg & Jungert, 2014). In one of the few studies to assess moral disengagement and bullying among elementary school students at a class-wide level, Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno (2012)

found an increased risk for bullying in Italian classrooms with higher endorsements of diffusion of responsibility and victim blaming, compared to group level endorsements of moral disengagement strategies aimed at disregarding or distorting the consequences of an action (Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012). Overall, these findings suggest that children's moral disengagement at both the individual and group level perpetuates peer victimization by attenuating defending behavior and mitigating any guilt that results from the failure to intervene.

It is also important to note that both of these studies examined victim attributions as a part of a quantitative measure designed to assess moral disengagement strategies in general (Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012; Thornberg & Jungert, 2014). Several questions on each measure described victim attributions, but these items referenced the victim in vague terms (e.g., *"It's okay to bully those who are not like others"*; Thornberg & Jungert, 2014).

f. Contextual Factors

Contextual factors may also promote the development of certain attributions over others. Attributions among peer-victimized children may differ by school ethnic composition, for example. Children were more likely to endorse characterological self-blame for hypothetical peer victimization when their school was comprised of peers of their same ethnicity (Graham, Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009). Children in the ethnic minority, however, were less likely to attribute their victimization to their character; instead, they were more prone to making external attributions, such as the prejudice of their peers (Graham et al., 2009). Moreover, Schacter & Juvonen (2015) found that the degree to which victimized children used characterological vs. behavioral self-blame for hypothetical victimization depended on school-wide levels of victimization. In schools where bullying was common, peer-victimized students endorsed higher levels of behavioral self-blame. Conversely, peer-victimized students attending

schools low in peer victimization reported higher levels of characterological self-blame. Hence, when children feel as though they are in the minority in terms of their peer victimization experiences, especially if they are among ethnically similar peers, they are more likely to conclude that their character is the reason for the abuse (Schacter & Juvonen, 2015). Both of these studies utilized versions of Graham and Juvonen's (1998) hypothetical peer victimization vignettes to assess children's bullying attributions.

Summary of Peer Victimization Consequences, Risk factors, and Attributions

In sum, peer victimization is a complex, but all too common phenomenon that continues to warrant the attention of researchers, educators, and parents alike. Peer victimization occurs within a social context in which all children are participants (either actively or passively). Bullying happens in the presence of peers 85% of the time (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), and school-based interventions that target bystander helping behavior have been shown to be particularly successful in reducing school bullying (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). Even by elementary school, children are aware of these aggressive acts, as evidenced by the increased concordance of victimization rates across informants. By grade 4, peer- and self-reports of victimization are more concordant than self- and teacher- or parent-reports, indicating that children become increasingly attuned to these peer dynamics by early to mid-childhood (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002). While further investigation of children's explanations for this phenomenon is needed, a growing number of studies indicate that children tend to find fault with the victim for a variety of reasons. Hence, the question of who to blame- and *why* they are to blame- appears to be central in this process.

Although researchers have investigated how children explain why they or others are the targets of peer victimization, several key gaps in the literature remain. First, qualitative

investigations tend to focus on students in late childhood or adolescence (e.g., Smith et al., 2004; Frisé et al., 2007; Thornberg, 2010), as do a few quantitative studies (Batanova et al., 2014; Graham & Juvonen, 1998). This makes sense given this time frame coincides with the peak in victimization seen during middle school. Early adolescence also coincides with an increase in cognitive ability, which may allow for a more sophisticated reflection on why youth are targets of peer victimization. Yet, if certain attributions mediate or moderate the association between victimization and maladjustment (e.g., Gibb & Alloy, 2006; Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2013) and attributional styles begin to crystallize in adolescence (D. A. Cole et al., 2008), identifying attributions at an earlier age is critical. Second, the majority of studies have relied on hypothetical vignettes to examine peer victimization attributions. Yet, imagined bullying scenarios may not fully capture the complexity and nuance (e.g., social status) associated with the actual experience or witness of peer victimization; children's reactions or attitudes toward these vignettes may be biased by the artificial nature of the task (Salmivalli, 2010). In other words, bullying occurs in a myriad of possible ways (e.g., overt, relational, cyber, etc.), and assessing a child's explanation of peer victimization through a few "bullying" vignettes cannot capture all possible bullying episodes a child may have encountered. Thus, children may be responding to the vignettes with limited personal insight into the characters or motives involved in the story, and their responses may or may not be a valid reflection of the attributions they make for why children are peer victimized at their school, for example. As such, a goal of the current study was to develop a measure that elicits from a child a more general explanation for why children are bullied, rather than limit the assessment of attributions to a contrived scenario. The measure used in the current investigation asks children questions about "bullied children" and the "bully." While these terms convey the necessary point of reference (bullied children),

they are also broad enough for a child to describe a bully and bullied child according to his or her own understanding or experience of peer victimization.

Finally, most studies have focused on assessing the attributions of aggressors or victims, or at least have asked children to provide attributions for their own (potential or actual) victimization (e.g., Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Clifford, 2013). However, bullying is a social process, and it is necessary to understand the attributions made by the broader peer group about victimized children in general, as peers' attributions may influence the extent to which they intervene during episodes of bullying. Just as a victim may be asking himself, "Why me?" a bystander may also question, "Why him?"

Current Investigation

Given the lack of empirically validated measures that assess children's attributions for peer victimization, the first objective of the current study was to evaluate a newly developed measure, the Bullying Attribution Scale, which was created to assess a broad set of factors that could explain why elementary school children are targets of peer victimization. In contrast to many previous investigations assessing bullying attributions, this measure was administered to all children in the classroom, regardless of peer victimization status, and children were provided with a list of items describing reasons why children may be bullied and then asked to indicate the extent to which they believe each reason captured why a child is bullied. The current investigation has the following aims:

Aim 1. The current study examined the factor structure and psychometric properties of a new measure (Bullying Attribution Scale; BAS) that assessed attributions children make for peer victimization. In light of previous research, it was hypothesized (Hypothesis 1) that several factors would emerge: victim characteristics, bully characteristics, and aspects of the bully-

victim relationship. The internal consistency of each factor was examined. In addition, to establish the concurrent validity of the measure, the current investigation examined whether the factors that emerged were associated with other variables (i.e., peer victimization, bullying, internalizing symptoms, and positive bystander behavior) at a single time point.

Aim 2. As previously discussed, few studies have examined the bullying attributions of children independent of their involvement in peer victimization. This study identified participants based on their levels of peer victimization and bullying behavior, and sorted them into four categories: victim, bully, bully-victim, and not involved as a bully, victim, or bully-victim. The goal was to examine whether attributions differed by group membership. Given factors' attribution type was unknown a priori, this goal was exploratory.

Aim 3. A third aim of the current investigation was to establish the predictive validity of the BAS. To do so, the current study examined whether children's attributions in the fall were associated with levels of peer victimization, bullying, bystander behavior, and internalizing symptoms in the spring, controlling for prior levels of each variable. Also examined was whether the level of peer victimization in the fall moderated the association between attributions assessed in the fall and variables related to peer victimization and psychosocial functioning in the spring. Evidence suggests that peer victimized children who endorse bullying attributions regarding victim characteristics are at increased risk for future internalizing disorders and continued victimization (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Schacter et al., 2015), as such internal attributions can promote feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Abramson et al., 1989). Consistent with previous literature, it was predicted (Hypothesis 3a) that children's attributions specific to victim characteristics would be positively associated with subsequent victimization and internalizing symptoms, and that this association would be stronger for children scoring higher on peer

victimization in the fall of the academic year. In addition, it was expected (Hypothesis 3b) that children who attribute victimization to reasons associated with the bully (i.e., bullies are jealous of the victimized child) would score higher on teacher-reported positive bystander behavior, and these bully-related attributions would be unrelated to depressive symptoms or victimization levels. Associations between attributions and bullying behavior were largely exploratory, and thus no a priori hypotheses were specified.

While some have found a high degree of concordance between peer and self-report measures in children (e.g., Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002), others have found important discrepancies in terms of outcomes. For example, Graham and Juvonen (1998) found that children who perceived themselves as victims suffered from intrapsychological consequences of peer abuse (e.g., low self-worth), whereas children perceived by peers to be victims (and not necessarily by self-report) were more likely to experience the interpersonal consequences associated with bullying (e.g., rejection). In light of these findings, the current investigation examined the relation between attributions and self-, teacher-, and peer-reported peer victimization and bullying.

II. Methods

Development of the Bullying Attribution Scale

First, an extensive literature review was conducted to generate an item set. To get a sense of the possible explanations for victimization identified in previous research, the initial search reviewed general risk factors (e.g., personal characteristics, behavioral traits, social status) associated with peer victimization. Additionally, qualitative articles that directly asked children to provide reasons for peer victimization were thoroughly reviewed (e.g., Frisé et al., 2007). Possible items were generated based on the recurrent emerging themes in the literature, which included socially devalued victim characteristics (e.g., victim behaves inappropriately, victim looks different), aspects of the bully-victim relationship (e.g., bully and victim do not like each other), and bully characteristics (e.g., children who bully have low self-esteem).

Existing measures describing attributions related to peer aggression, including hypothetical vignettes, were also reviewed. While some researchers have examined more general attributional styles in children (e.g., Gibb & Alloy, 2006) or studied attributions via ambiguous hypothetical scenarios with elements of potential peer harassment (Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002; Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2013; Prinstein et al., 2005), few measures that assessed attributions regarding peer victimization specifically were found. Rather, these ambiguous hypothetical vignettes often describe peer interactions with negative outcomes (not explicit peer victimization), and then ask the child to respond as if they were the target of the negative outcome. For instance, based on methods initially described by Dodge (1980), Prinstein et al. (2005) presented kindergartners and 10th graders with vignettes depicting an ambiguous peer interaction (e.g., “*A kid bumps you from behind and your books fall into a puddle*”). Participants were asked to describe what happened in the story by choosing from several attributions

reflecting either a benign interpretation (e.g., “*The kid was running down the street and didn’t see you*”), a critical self-referent, internal attribution (e.g., “*The kid was trying to push you down because you are not as good as the other kids*”), and, for the 10th graders, a hostile intent attribution (e.g., “*The kid was trying to push you down because that kid pushes almost everyone around*”). Studies that use this measurement technique often ask children to respond to these hypothetical peer harassment scenarios by endorsing either hostile attribution biases or general self-blame, yet the use of closed-ended response options may limit response validity (Prinstein et al., 2005). Even among the studies in which children are able to indicate the extent to which they agree with statements of self-blame, items tend to be vague or overly general (e.g., “*I must have done something to make it happen*”; Perren et al., 2013). What it is about the victim’s behavior (or any other personal attribute) that is to blame remains an important question.

Finally, two measures that more directly asked children about peer victimization attributions were reviewed. As stated previously, Graham and Juvonen (1998) created a questionnaire assessing attributions that measured children’s subjective appraisals of hypothetical vignettes depicting victimization (i.e., one incident involving humiliation and another involving physical threat). Imagining they were the target of the provocation, children indicated how much they agreed with 32 items capturing their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the vignettes. In a sample of middle schoolers, two factors reflecting children’s self-blaming attributions emerged—characterological (e.g., “*If I were a cooler kid, I wouldn’t get picked on*”) and behavioral (e.g., “*I should have been more careful*”). Several other factors related to hostility, perceiving threat from others, insecurity, and passivity also emerged, but these were largely comprised of items reflecting the child’s feelings toward, or reactions to, the scenario rather than their explanations for it (Graham & Juvonen, 1998). This measure has been used in

several subsequent studies and has shown adequate validity and reliability (Batanova et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2006).

Although there is a precedent for using hypothetical vignettes to assess children's attributions for peer victimization, there are possible limitations to this approach, including the extent to which reading a vignette and reflecting on actual bullying scenarios evoke similar cognitions. Indeed, vignette responses refer to contrived scenarios that may not be applicable to all children. The goal of the current investigation was to develop a measure that assesses specific attributions for why children believe peer victimization occurs when reflecting on peer victimization more generally. In line with this goal, it was decided to create a measure that focused on the content, rather than the dimensions (i.e., locus of control, stability, controllability), of the attribution. As previously discussed, interpreting children's causal attributions along dimensions of controllability or stability is relatively subjective and may not be developmentally appropriate for young children (Dresel et al., 2005). Moreover, while blaming the victim has been shown to be positively related to bullying, internalizing symptoms in victims, and negatively related to defending among peers (Thornberg & Jungert, 2014), we need to understand the specific reasons for why children come to blame victims for their plight (e.g., specific characteristics or attributes that are blamed) to inform intervention efforts.

To my knowledge, Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, and Clifford's (2013) questionnaire is the only measure to focus on specific content-based categories of attributions for peer victimization. They initially asked 4th graders to provide reasons for why someone may not like or pick on them. Five categories emerged and were sorted by the direction of the social comparison: jealousy (downward), interaction/mutual antipathy (horizontal), being "different" (horizontal to upward), personal behavior (e.g., being clumsy; upward), and being "uncool"

(upward). It is important to note that they tried to sort attributions based on Graham and Juvonen's (1998) dimensional framework (i.e., CSB versus BSB), but had difficulty incorporating responses that indicated "mutual or shared blame" and deciding whether mutual enmity was stable. Visconti et al. then created a quantitative measure, titled *Why Kids Pick on Me*, with each of the previous five categories representing a subscale. All items follow the stem, "When someone picks on me, it is because..." The scale has evidenced adequate reliability (Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, et al., 2013; Visconti, Sechler, et al., 2013).

The constructs or items most commonly assessed across these attributional measures and identified via qualitative studies were retained for use in the construction of the attribution measure under investigation in the current study. While the current measure most closely resembles the Visconti et al. *Why Kids Pick on Me* questionnaire due to the use of content-specific categories, the question stem represents a key difference. Further, the current measure does not use 1st person pronouns in the items describing specific attributions, rather the child responds to each item from a 3rd person perspective. In other words, this measure aims to assess the specific content of attributions made by all children, regardless of their victimization status. It is worth noting here too, however, that many, if not most, children experience some form of peer harassment at some point in childhood and thus measures assessing personal reasons for victimization in all children (regardless of victimization status) can be useful and appropriate. But, the majority of children are not chronically bullied, and likely do not identify with the "bullied" label. Thus, we can assume that non-bullied children responding to items assessing peer victimization attributions in the 3rd person may be referencing their observations of bullied peers. To better inform interventions that target bullied children's negative self-evaluations or hostile attributions, peers' perceptions of bullied children should be assessed in order to

determine whether bullied children's reasons for their victimization align with other children's explanations for why children are victimized (Visconti, Sechler, et al., 2013).

Items were created and sorted into three main categories of attributions: victim characteristics, bully characteristics, and characteristics of the bully-victim relationship. Within each category, items were selected to tap into sub-dimensions of the broader category. For victim characteristics, items included child demographic characteristics, physical appearance, inappropriate behaviors, internalizing symptoms, social difficulties, and academic competence. Items capturing bully characteristics reflected meanness, low self-esteem, and jealousy. Finally, attributions related to characteristics of the bully-victim relationship assessed antipathy, such as the bully and victim are "enemies." Per Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, and Clifford (2013), children may attribute peer victimization to positive personal characteristics of the victim, such as having above-average intelligence. Thus, items that were both negatively and positively valenced were included (e.g., "*Bullied kids are smarter than most kids*," "*Bullied kids earn worse grades than most kids*").

Participants

Children were recruited from seven schools located in the Southeastern United States. Schools were selected to represent the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the area. Approximately 51% of parents ($n = 482$) consented to allow their child to participate in the study; 49% of parents either declined consent ($n = 101$) or failed to return a consent form ($n = 362$). Only 10 children declined to assent to participate in the study. Participants (56% female, $M = 9.16$ years old, $SD = .63$) were in the 3rd or 4th grade. The sample was predominantly White (66%) and African American (10%), with other racial and ethnic groups comprising approximately 16.9% of the sample (7.1% did not report racial identity). Overall, 29.7% of

households reported an annual income of less than \$25,000 per year, 19.1% reported an annual income between \$25,000 and \$50,000, 16.8% reported an annual income between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 21.6% reported an annual household income greater than \$100,000 per year (12.9% did not report income).

Procedures

Data were collected as part of a larger project examining the correlates of peer conflict and bullying. The University Institutional Review Board approved the project prior to data collection. Informational parental consent and demographic forms were first sent home to parents, and written parental consent and child assent were obtained for all study participants prior to participation. Data from children and teachers were collected at two time points in a single academic year. Children completed assessment materials in early fall of 2015 (September/October; T1) and late spring of 2016 (May; T2). Children completed self- and peer-report measures in class groups overseen by trained research assistants. Children were presented with survey packets and asked to answer questions honestly. Instructions and survey items were read aloud by trained research staff, including a definition of bullying. The definition reminded children that bullying involves intentional, repeated acts of aggression between children of unequal strength or power (e.g., physically stronger, higher social status). For the peer nomination procedure, children used a numerical roster and nominated classmates by circling the number corresponding to their name. To minimize discussion about ratings, children were spaced apart, instructed to keep answers covered, and allowed to work on distracter activities (e.g., mazes) between sets of questions and for approximately five minutes after the completion of all questionnaires. Teachers completed questionnaires for each consented child in their classroom and were compensated \$35 in the fall and \$35 in the spring for their participation.

It is important to note that some of the children participating in the larger study were also participating in an intervention trial examining the efficacy of a school-based mentoring program for chronically bullied students. Children were eligible for the intervention if they self-reported experiencing peer victimization at a frequency greater than or equal to 3-4 times in the past 30 days or were perceived by their teacher as experiencing peer victimization at a rate greater than or equal to 1-2 times in the past 30 days. A more relaxed criterion was used for teacher-reported victimization because existing research suggests that teachers may underreport children's victimization experiences due to the fact that peer victimization often occurs outside of a teacher's awareness. Based on the above criteria, 96 children were identified via child- or teacher-report as chronic victims. Mentors were available for 29 chronically bullied children. Children were randomly assigned to mentoring plus customary school services ($n = 29$) or to customary school services only ($n = 67$).

Measures

Demographics. An eight-item questionnaire was administered to parents to capture basic demographic information (e.g., children's age, sex, race, family income).

Bullying Attributions. The Bullying Attribution Scale (BAS; Manring, unpublished) assessed the extent to which children agreed with certain reasons for peer victimization. There are 43 items total, and items generally indicate attributions related to victim characteristics, bully characteristics, or characteristics of the bully-victim relationship. Each item describes one reason why a child might be bullied (e.g., "Bullied kids look different"). The child is asked to respond to each item in two parts: (a) indicate how true the reason is for bullied children in general on a 5-point scale ("Not true at all" to "Very true"), and then (b) indicate whether the item could be a reason why the child himself was bullied by answering "Yes," "No," or "Not bullied." The

majority of children involved in fall data collection were not asked to complete part (b) for any of the items, and therefore only responses to part (a) were used to address the aims of the current investigation.

Internalizing Symptoms. Internalizing symptoms were assessed using the eight item Withdrawn/Depressed scale (WDS) of the Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). This was the only scale of the YSR administered during data collection. Children were asked to indicate how true each item was for them in the past six months on a 5-point scale (“Not at all” to “Always true”). All eight items were summed to create a total score, with higher scores representing higher levels of depression. The YSR has demonstrated good psychometric properties in a non-referred, nationally representative sample of adolescents (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), and the withdrawn/depressed scale has demonstrated adequate reliability as a stand-alone scale in prior studies as well ($\alpha = .78$; Becker et al., 2014). Internal consistency was acceptable in the current sample ($\alpha = .69$ at T1, $\alpha = .74$ at T2).

Self-reported Peer Victimization and Bullying Behaviors. A modified version of the University of Illinois Bully Scale (IBS; Espelage & Holt, 2001) was used to assess self-reported peer victimization and bullying behavior. The original version contained three subscales, including items measuring fighting, bullying, and victimization. Prior investigations have found Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .80-.88 for the three individual scales (Espelage & Holt, 2013; Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Espelage & Holt, 2001). In addition to the original three subscales, four items were added to the measure to assess relational victimization (e.g., “*Other students intentionally excluded me from activities or friendships*”). Children were asked how often in the last 30 days they either engaged in each behavior or the behavior happened to them, by responding to a 5-point scale (“Never” to “7 or more times”). Items (e.g., “*Other students*

made fun of me”) assessing overt and relational victimization were averaged to form one total victimization score, and the internal consistency for this scale was good ($\alpha = .90$ at T1, $\alpha = .92$ at T2). Items (e.g., *“In a group I teased other students”*) assessing overt and relational bullying were also averaged to form one total bullying score. The bullying scale also displayed sufficient reliability ($\alpha = .86$ at T1, $\alpha = .89$ at T2).

Teacher-Reported Victimization, Bullying, and Positive Bystander Behaviors. A parallel version of IBS was utilized to assess teacher-reported bullying behavior (IBS-TV; Espelage & Holt, 2001). Unlike the child version of the IBS, the IBS-TV includes a scale measuring positive bystander behavior. Teachers were asked how often in the last 30 days they witnessed students engage in each behavior (e.g., *“This student upset other students for the fun of it”*), with response options ranging from “Never” to “7 or more times.” Items from the positive bystander behavior scale (e.g., *“Tried to defend a student who was being bullied”*) were averaged to form a “bystander” scale ($\alpha = .91$ at T1, $\alpha = .93$ at T2), with higher scores indicating more positive bystander behaviors. Overt and relational bullying items (e.g., *“Spread lies or rumors about a student”*) were averaged to create a “bullying” scale ($\alpha = .85$ at T1, $\alpha = .90$ at T2). Items indicating overt and relational victimization (e.g., *“Was called mean names by another student”*) were averaged to create a “victimization” scale ($\alpha = .86$ at T1, $\alpha = .88$ at T2).

Peer-reported Bullying and Victimization. A peer nomination inventory was used to assess children’s bullying behavior and peer victimization (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982). Bullying behavior was assessed via two peer nomination items measuring overt (i.e., *“Who in your class hits, pushes, threatens, or teases other children?”*) and relational (i.e., *“Who in your class gossips about or leaves others out of activities?”*) bullying. Peer victimization was assessed via two peer nomination items measuring overt (i.e., *“Who in your class gets hit, pushed,*

threatened, or teased by other children?”) and relational (i.e., “*Who in your class gets gossiped about or left out of activities?*”) victimization. Student’s nominations were tallied for each item, the two items assessing bullying and victimization were then averaged separately, and scores were standardized within classroom. The validity and reliability of peer nomination procedures to assess these social constructs has been well established (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990).

Treatment of Missing Data

Across variables used in these analyses, missing data ranged from 5.6-26.8% in the fall and 1.2-28.8% in the spring. To account for missing data at the item level, subject-wise mean substitution was used to create composite scores. A composite score was created for a participant by averaging items on a scale when at least 50% of the items for that scale were present. Little’s (1995) MCAR analysis was utilized to determine the nature of the missing data at the participant level. Little’s MCAR test revealed that data was not missing completely at random in the fall ($\chi^2 = 14532.97$, $df = 12818$, $p = .00$) or spring ($\chi^2 = 11181.26$, $df = 9657$, $p = .00$). A series of logistic regression analyses were performed in SPSS v25.0 to identify variables in the data set associated with missingness. These analyses reveal that sex, age, income, and race were associated with missing values (dummy code 1 = data present, 0 = missing data) on the composite scores of variables of interest. These variables were included as covariates in all analysis models. Additionally, intervention status (dummy code 1 = children assigned to the intervention or waitlist condition; dummy code 0 = classroom peers of children participating in the intervention arm of the study) was also included as a control variable in all models that included T2 data. All analyses used Full-information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation to avoid the potential bias resulting from list-wise deletion.

It is also worth noting that missing data for the BAS in the fall ranged from 4-18%. Data were not MCAR as four 3rd grade classrooms (n = 54) in one school stopped at item 22 due to time constraints during data collection. When the EFA analyses were conducted on a sample that excluded these four 3rd grade classrooms, the pattern of results were similar to those from the analyses containing participants with missing data.

Data Analytic Plan

Descriptive statistics for and correlations among study variables were estimated in Mplus 7.3. Study variables were tested for violations of normality prior to conducting analyses, and analyses accommodated the features of the data. To account for the fact that students were nested within classrooms (i.e. observations were not independent), primary analyses were estimated in Mplus version 7.3 using the CLUSTER option with classroom as the cluster variable. The estimator for all analyses was maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR), which is robust against violations of multivariate normality.

Aim 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis. To address Aim 1, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the factor structure of the Bullying Attribution Scale (BAS). An EFA is based on a common factor model; it aims to identify the latent constructs underlying the manifest variables by partitioning the shared variance of a variable from its unique and error variance (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). This is in contrast to a principal components analysis (PCA) that does not differentiate between shared and unique variance and thus often inflates factor loadings (i.e., the correlation between a factor and an item loading on that factor). Before interpreting the results from an EFA analyses, three primary decisions must be made when conducting an EFA: (1) selecting the extraction method; (2) determining the number of factors to retain; and (3) deciding which rotation method to utilize

(Costello & Osborne, 2005). When identifying the optimal number of factors, the goal of EFA is not to explain optimal amounts of variance in a given model, but to shed light on the sources of common variation underlying the data (Preacher & MacCallum, 2003).

Maximum likelihood estimation was used as the factor extraction technique given it provides goodness of fit indices of the model, allows statistical significance testing of factor loadings, and permits the computation of confidence intervals (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Fabrigar et al., 1999). A scree plot was first generated in SPSS version 25 to provide an estimate of the number of factors to retain for further evaluation. The scree plot provides a graph of eigenvalues (i.e., the sum of the squared factor loadings for a given factor) and is often used to identify a bend or break in the data. While some propose that the number of data points above the break or bend indicate the number of factors to retain (Costello & Osborne, 2005), others have labeled this method too subjective and suggest using several different approaches (i.e., model fit, factor interpretability) to identify the correct number of factors to retain. In the current investigation, models with the number of factors suggested by bends in the scree plot (as well as models with one more and one less) were calculated (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Model fit indices (e.g., RMSEA, chi-square; Hu & Bentler, 1999), as well as factor interpretability, were also examined to approximate the optimal number of factors to retain (Fabrigar et al., 1999).

Rotation further simplifies the factor structure by maximizing factor loadings for the items that best map on to their respective factor. It was assumed that the factors were correlated and thus models were estimated using an oblique rotation technique (Geomin, default rotation technique in Mplus; Preacher & MacCallum, 2003). The Geomin rotation depicts how items load onto factors via a pattern matrix. Wald statistics indicate which factor loadings are significant. Items were generally retained for a particular factor when loadings were above .40 on one factor

with a difference of at least .20 from the secondary factor (e.g., Watson, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, Broadbent, & Skouteris, 2017). Items that did not load onto factors, or loaded onto several factors, were eliminated. After items with low loadings and/or cross-loadings were deleted, these steps were repeated until the most parsimonious factor structure was achieved. The ultimate goal of these analyses was to establish a parsimonious and interpretable factor structure with clear factor loadings, and thus the conceptual fit of different factor solutions was also heavily considered.

Internal consistency for factors was computed using results from the final EFA. The stability of factors assessing bullying attributions from fall to spring was also examined. Because it is possible that the stability of attributions for why children are bullied could vary as a function of a child's experience of peer victimization, the current investigation examined the extent to which levels of peer victimization in the fall moderated the association between fall and spring bullying attributions. First order predictors (peer victimization * factor) were centered prior to creating interaction terms and included in models regressing each bullying attribution factor in the spring on the same factor in the fall and demographic control variables. Significant interactions were probed using simple slope analyses to determine the nature of the moderation effects (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

To examine concurrent validity, bivariate correlations and regression models assessed the relationship between attributions and measures of self-, peer-, and teacher-reported peer victimization, self-reported internalizing symptoms, self-, peer-, teacher-reported bullying behaviors, and teacher-reported positive bystander behaviors in the fall. For each of these variables (i.e., victimization, bullying, internalizing symptoms, bystander behavior), a regression model regressed the variable on attributions and a set of control variables at the same time point.

Control variables were race (dummy code 1 = White), age, sex (dummy code 1 = male), and family income. Regression models were estimated in Mplus 7.3.

Aim 2: Differences Among Groups. To address Aim 2, behavioral subgroups were created based on children's scores on teacher- and peer-reported bullying behavior and self-reported peer victimization. Children were identified as engaging in bullying behavior if they scored at or above 1SD of the mean ($\geq .73$) on peer-reported bullying or if they scored at or above 1SD of the mean ($\geq .84$) on teacher-reported bullying. This multi-informant approach to identifying bullies was used to negate the underestimation of bullying behavior typically seen in children's self-reports (e.g., J. C. M. Cole et al., 2006). Children were classified as "victims" if (1) they endorsed 2 or more victimization items at a rate greater than or equal to "3 to 4 times in the last 30 days", as this has been found to be a reasonable lower-bound cutoff point for identifying rates of victims (Solberg & Olweus, 2003) and (2) they were not identified as engaging in bullying via a peer or teacher report measure. Children were classified as bullies if they demonstrated bullying behavior via peer- or teacher-report and failed to endorse 2 or more self-reported peer victimization items at a rate greater than or equal to "3 to 4 times in the last 30 days." Children were classified as "bully-victims" if they demonstrated both bullying behavior and endorsed 2 or more self-reported peer victimization items at a rate greater than or equal to "3 to 4 times in the last 30 days." If a child did not meet the victim, bully, or bully-victim criteria, they were classified as not directly engaged in bullying or victimization.

It is important to note that in order to be classified into one of the four groups, children 1) had to have data on peer- and teacher-reported bullying and self-reported peer victimization or 2) meet criteria on peer- or teacher-reported bullying and have self-reported peer victimization data. Analyses that included this grouping variable were based on a subsample of 334 children who

were assigned to one of the four groups based on their bullying and peer victimization score. This resulted in 33 children in the Bully-Only group, 92 children in the Victim-Only group, 40 children in the Bully-Victim group, and 169 children in the Uninvolved group.

A series of regression analyses were then conducted to examine mean level difference in bullying attributions measured in the fall as a function of group memberships. Regression models controlled for race, age, sex, and family income. Dummy coded variables were created for the bully-victim status variables (e.g., Victim-Only = 1 and Not Victim-Only = 0). Each bullying attribution factor was separately regressed on to three of the four dummy coded variables, with the non-represented subgroup representing the reference category.

Aim 3: Regression Analyses. Predictive validity of BAS factors (Aim 3) was assessed whether bullying attribution factors in the fall were associated with adjustment outcomes in the spring, controlling for prior levels of adjustment. Each outcome measure assessed in the spring was separately regressed on the outcome variable measured in the fall, all three bullying attribution factors, and a set of control variables. Control variables were race, age, sex, family income, and intervention status (dummy code 1 = child participating in intervention). Outcomes included self-reported internalizing symptoms, self-reported peer victimization and bullying behavior, peer-reported victimization and bullying, and teacher-reported victimization, bullying behavior, and positive bystander behavior. To examine whether peer victimization moderated the association between attribution type and psychosocial functioning in the spring, cross-product terms were created to model the interaction between each attribution type and peer victimization. Prior to forming an interaction term, first order predictors (i.e., self-reported peer victimization, each of the three factors) were centered. Significant interactions were probed using simple slope

analyses and regions of significance testing to determine the nature of the moderation effects (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

III. Results

Preliminary Analyses

Mean and standard deviations for and correlations among primary study variable are reported in Tables 1-2. With the exception of self-reported bullying, outcome variables were generally normally distributed (skewness < 3.0, kurtosis < 8.0). Self-reported bullying measured in the fall and spring was non-normal (T1 skewness = 3.65 and kurtosis = 18.91 and T2 skewness = 4.47 and kurtosis = 25.62, respectively). Maximum likelihood with robust standard errors was used as the estimator for all analyses, which is robust to multivariate non-normality. In general, there was moderate concordance across report sources for peer victimization and bullying. Self-reported bullying was positively associated with self- and teacher- reported victimization, but unassociated with peer-reported victimization. Self-reported victimization was positively associated with bullying across all report sources. Those with higher self-reported bullying and victimization scores were also more likely to report internalizing symptoms, and higher self- and teacher-reported victimization scores were associated with higher scores on positive bystander behavior.

Race was negatively correlated with both self-and teacher-reported bullying and internalizing symptoms, such that minority participants were more likely to score higher on self- and teacher-report bullying and self-report higher levels of internalizing symptoms. In addition, girls were more likely than boys to engage in positive bystander behavior as rated by teachers. Income was negatively associated with self- and teacher-reported victimization and bullying across all three report sources. Income was also negatively associated with positive bystander behavior and self-reported internalizing symptoms.

Primary Analyses

Aim 1: Exploratory Factor Analyses. To address Aim 1, the factor structure and psychometric properties of the Bullying Attribution Scale (BAS) were examined. It was hypothesized that factors related to victim characteristics, bully characteristics, and aspects of a bully-victim relationship would emerge, and that these factors would be associated with measures of peer victimization involvement and psychosocial functioning. When deciding on an initial solution to begin the factor analysis, the scree plot and eigenvalues were examined. Eigenvalues were greater than 1.0 for 11 factors (8.55-1.06), and slight bends in the scree plot emerged at 3, 6, and 12 factors. Based on this criteria, a 12-factor model was first examined as a possible solution. While model fit was acceptable for the 12-factor model (e.g., RMSEA = .03, CFI = .94, TLI = .85, SRMR = .02), the factor structure that emerged was difficult to interpret (e.g., several factors had no items with rotated factor loadings $> .4$ or had high cross-loadings, one factor was uncorrelated with all other factors, etc.). Subsequent EFAs were evaluated for 11- through 1-factor models, but factor interpretability remained significantly limited for solutions with more than 3 factors. The 1-factor model was considered, but items with factor loadings greater than .4 failed to reflect a cohesive and interpretable factor. Therefore, the 2 and 3-factor models were evaluated as possible solutions based on the aforementioned criteria. The two factors in the 2-factor solution and the first two factors in the 3-factor solution were similar in terms of content and described victim characteristics. However, the third factor in the 3-factor model referred to aspects of the bully-victim relationship, which represented an additional meaningful factor. Thus, the 3-factor model was further examined. See Table 3 for model fit statistics for 1-12-factor models, and the rotated factor loadings for the full 2-, 3-, and 4-factor solutions are presented in Tables 4-6.

The RMSEA (.03) and SRMR (.05) for the initial 3-factor model containing all 43 items suggested acceptable model fit, but the CFI (.86) and the TLI (.84) indicated poor model fit. However, twenty one of the forty three items did not load onto one of the three factors. The 3-factor model was reanalyzed removing items that failed to load on one of the three factors and model fit improved (RMSEA = .03, CFI = .94, TLI = .92, SRMR = .04). The 22-item 3-factor model revealed 5 items that failed to load strongly on to one of the three factors. These 5 items were removed and a 17-item 3-factor model was analyzed (RMSEA = .04, CFI = .94, TLI = .90, SRMR = .04). The reanalysis revealed that only one item failed to load strongly on the 17-item 3-factor model, and thus a 3-factor solution was reanalyzed on 16 items. All 16 items loaded well on to one of the three factors, and fit information for the 16-item 3-factor model was acceptable (RMSEA = .04, CFI = .94, TLI = .91, SRMR = .04). The 16-item 3-factor solution was deemed the model of choice and used in all subsequent analyses. Rotated factor loadings for the 22-, 17-, and final 16-item 3-factor solution are presented in Tables 7-9. Means and standard deviations for all 16 items are presented in Table 10.

After reviewing item content, the first factor was labeled '*Victim Otherness*' as it described characteristics of a victim that differ (presumably negatively) from the group norm (e.g., weight, race, athleticism). The second factor was labeled '*Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*' because it described a victim's internal distress and academic interests (e.g., crying, spending time on schoolwork). The third factor was labeled '*Bully-Victim Conflict*' as it described elements of a conflictual relationship between a bully and victim (e.g., the bully and victim are enemies). Adequate levels of reliability were observed for each of the three factors (alphas = .77, .77, and .65 for *Victim Otherness*, *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*, and *Bully-*

Victim Conflict, respectively), with the reliability of the third factor being slightly lower than the first and second factor.

Factor Stability. To examine whether factor reliability held over time, the internal consistency of each factor was estimated from data collected during the spring semester of the same academic year. Estimates of internal consistency in the spring were similar to the fall estimates of internal consistency for each factor (alphas = .83, .79, and .68 for *Victim Otherness*, *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*, and *Bully-Victim Conflict*, respectively). Additionally, correlations between the same factors over time suggested moderate stability (*Victim Otherness*, $r = .29$; *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*, $r = .26$; and *Bully-Victim Conflict*, $r = .36$; all $ps < .05$).

Also examined was whether the stability of bullying attributions from fall to spring was contingent on children's level of self-reported peer-victimization. Interaction terms (peer victimization * factor) were created and included in models regressing each factor in the spring on the same factor in the fall and demographic control variables. The stability of *Victim Otherness* and *Bully-Victim Conflict* across the school year was not conditional on fall levels of self-reported victimization. However, the stability of *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* was conditional on self-reported victimization ($\beta = -.19$, $SE = .08$, $p = .02$). Simple slope analyses revealed a significant association between fall and spring scores on *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* when children scores 1SD below the mean ($b = .42$, $SE = .08$, $p = .00$) and at the mean ($b = .26$, $SE = .06$, $p = .00$) on self-reported peer victimization, but not at 1SD above the mean ($b = .11$, $SE = .08$, $p = .20$; see Figure 1). Regions of significance testing revealed that the association between *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* in the fall and spring was significant when children's self-reported peer victimization scores were below a value of .73. This suggests

that children with low to average levels of peer victimization in the fall (i.e., scores less than .76 *SD* above the mean) showed more stability on the attribution *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* across the school year than children with high levels of peer victimization in the fall.

Concurrent Validity of Factors. Bivariate correlations among bullying attribution factors as well as the associations between bullying attribution factors and other primary variables of interest at T1 are presented in Table 2. The correlations among all 3 attribution factors were significant. *Victim Otherness* was positively associated with self-reported bullying and internalizing symptoms ($r = .19, p < .05$; $r = .17, p < .01$). *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* was positively associated with self-reported bullying ($r = .14, p < .05$).

To test whether the endorsement of certain attributions predicted peer victimization, bullying, internalizing symptoms, or positive bystander behavior at T1, a series of linear regression models were estimated regressing the outcome variable simultaneously on all three attribution factors and a set of control variables (i.e., age, sex, race, and income). All estimated models were fully saturated. *Victim Otherness* emerged as a significant positive predictor of self-reported bullying and internalizing symptoms ($\beta = .17, SE = .05, p < .05$; $\beta = .17, SE = .05, p < .00$, respectively), as well as a negative predictor of positive bystander behavior at the level of a non-significant trend ($\beta = -.10, SE = .05, p = .07$). This suggests that children who attribute peer victimization to a victim's deviance from the norm are also more likely to report engaging in bullying behaviors and experiencing internalizing distress. No other significant findings regarding attributions emerged.

Additionally, several demographic variables were significantly related to peer victimization, bullying, positive bystander behavior, and internalizing symptoms. Income was negatively associated with self-reported peer victimization, bullying, and internalizing symptoms

($\beta = -.34$, $SE = .05$, $p < .00$; $\beta = -.15$, $SE = .04$, $p < .00$; $\beta = -.32$, $SE = .05$, $p < .00$, respectively) and teacher-reported peer victimization and bullying ($\beta = -.16$, $SE = .05$, $p < .00$; $\beta = -.17$, $SE = .05$, $p < .00$). This suggests that children from more affluent families were less likely to report (or have teachers endorse) peer victimization, bullying behaviors, and internalizing symptoms than children from less affluent families. Race negatively predicted self- and teacher-reported bullying ($\beta = -.14$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$; $\beta = -.14$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$), such that White children received lower scores on self- and teacher-reported bullying behavior than children from minority groups. Boys were more likely than girls to be nominated as bullies by peers and less likely to demonstrate teacher-reported positive bystander behavior, albeit at the level of a non-significant trend ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .06$, $p = .06$; $\beta = -.09$, $SE = .05$, $p = .08$). See Tables 10-12 for all model results.

Aim 2: Mean Differences in Attributions by Bully-victim Status. Aim 2 examined whether children's endorsement of attributions for why children are bullied varied depending on bully-victim status (i.e., bully-only, victim-only, bully-victim, and uninvolved). It was hypothesized that levels of the bullying attribution factors established in the EFA would differ depending on a child's involvement in bullying. A series of regression analyses were conducted to examine mean-level differences in attribution endorsement based on bully-victim status, controlling for race, age, sex, and family income. There was a significant mean difference between the Victim-Only group and the Uninvolved group ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$). Relative to children in the Uninvolved group, children in the Victim-Only group scored .16 higher on *Victim Otherness*. No other mean difference emerged across all three bullying attribution factors based on bully-victim status. Race was also negatively associated with *Victim*

Otherness ($\beta = -.16$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$), such that White children scored .26 lower on this factor than children from minority groups.

Aim 3: Predictive Validity of Factors. Aim 3 sought to establish the predictive validity of the BAS. It was hypothesized that endorsing attributions related to victim characteristics would be positively associated with future peer victimization and internalizing symptoms, particularly for those children with a history of victimization. In contrast, I hypothesized that children's scores on attributions specific to bully characteristics would be unrelated to bullying or victimization, but would be positively associated with teacher-reported bystander behavior. However, this was not examined in these analyses because a factor specific to aspects of the bully did not emerge.

Victim Otherness was a positive predictor of teacher-reported bullying in the spring ($\beta = .08$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$), such that children scoring higher on *Victim Otherness* were more likely to be perceived by their teachers as engaging in bullying behavior in the spring. No other significant findings emerged for *Victim Otherness*. *Bully-Victim Conflict* positively predicted peer-reported bullying ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .05$, $p = .05$) and negatively predicted peer-reported victimization ($\beta = -.12$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$) in the spring, meaning children who were more likely to attribute bullying to *Bully-Victim Conflict* were more likely to be seen as bullies, and less likely as victims, by their peers in the spring. *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* did not emerge as a significant predictor of any outcome variable. Model results are reported in Tables 13-15.

Moderation Analyses. Examined next was whether the associations between bullying attributions and social and psychological outcomes measured in the spring were conditional on fall levels of peer victimization. Self-reported victimization moderated the association between *Victim Otherness* and peer-reported bullying ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .04$, $p = .01$), controlling for

demographic variables and fall scores on peer-reported bullying. Simple slope analyses revealed that *Victim Otherness* emerged as a positive predictor of peer-reported bullying in the spring when children's self-reported peer victimization score in the fall was at 1SD above the mean ($b = .20$, $SE = .09$, $p = .02$), but not when scores on peer victimization were at the mean or 1SD below the mean ($b = .08$, $SE = .06$, $p = .15$; $b = -.03$, $SE = .06$, $p = .61$, respectively; see Figure 2). More specifically, regions of significance testing revealed that the relation between *Victim Otherness* and peer-reported bullying was significant when children's self-reported peer victimization score was .45 SD above the mean or -2.88 SD below the mean. Analyses also revealed that the relation between *Bully-Victim Conflict* and self-reported bullying in the spring ($\beta = .15$, $SE = .06$, $p = .01$) was moderated by self-reported victimization. However, simple slope analyses revealed that the relation between *Bully-Victim Conflict* and self-reported bullying in the spring was not significant when scores on self-reported victimization were 1SD below the mean ($b = -.07$, $SE = .04$, $p = .07$), at the mean ($b = -.00$, $SE = .02$, $p = .97$), or 1SD above the mean ($b = .07$, $SE = .04$, $p = .10$; see Figure 3). However, regions of significance testing revealed that *Bully-Victim Conflict* was a significant predictor of self-reported bullying when scores on self-reported peer victimization were 1.99 SD above the mean and -1.30 SD below the mean. This suggests that at low levels of self-reported peer victimization, endorsing *Bully-Victim Conflict* in the fall negatively predicted self-reported bullying in the spring. On the other hand, *Bully-Victim Conflict* positively predicted self-reported bullying at high levels of peer victimization.

Analyses also revealed that several of the control variables emerged as significant predictors of spring scores on peer victimization, bullying, positive bystander behavior, and internalizing symptoms. Boys were more likely than girls to be nominated as bullies by peers in

the spring ($\beta = .15$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$). Age was a negative predictor of self-reported victimization ($\beta = -.10$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$) and teacher-reported bullying in the spring ($\beta = -.10$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$), such that older children scored lower on self-reported peer victimization and teacher-reported bullying than younger children. Intervention status also negatively predicted self-reported victimization ($\beta = -.14$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$). Race positively predicted self-reported internalizing symptoms ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .06$, $p = .05$), peer-reported victimization ($\beta = .09$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$), and teacher-reported bystander behavior ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$) in the spring; White students scored higher on internalizing symptoms, peer-reported bullying, and teacher-reported positive bystander behavior than minority students. Income negatively predicted self- and teacher-reported victimization ($\beta = -.10$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$; $\beta = -.13$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$, respectively), such that children from more affluent families scored lower on peer victimization in the spring.

IV. Discussion

Peer victimization is a pervasive and consequential public health problem that continues to affect the international community despite decades of research on its etiology and prevention. Whether a child is involved as a bully, victim, or bystander, peer victimization is a part of the social landscape that children must navigate. As children affected by bullying struggle to manage their peer group relations, it is likely that they will consider the reasons why children succumb to peer victimization. Few quantitative studies, however, have examined children's perceptions for why other children experience peer victimization. The primary aim of the current study was to examine children's attributions for peer victimization via a newly developed measure, the Bullying Attribution Scale (BAS), in a sample of third and fourth grade elementary school students. It was hypothesized that items from the BAS would load onto factors describing characteristics of the victim, bully, and bully-victim relationship. It was also predicted that these attributions would be differentially related to adjustment outcomes concurrently and over time. Moreover, given few studies have investigated bullying attributions irrespective of a child's role in the peer victimization process, group differences in attributions were examined for differences depending on a child's bully-victim status.

Factor Structure of the BAS

Results of the EFA supported a 3-factor solution. Factors evidenced good to adequate reliability, albeit the internal consistency estimate ($\alpha = .65$) for the 3rd factor, *Bully-Victim Conflict*, was not optimal. It was hypothesized that the EFA would reveal factors related to victim characteristics, bully characteristics, and aspects of the bully-victim relationship. Consistent with this hypothesis, the first two factors (*Victim Otherness* and *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*) captured attributions for peer victimization related to characteristics of the victim,

and the 3rd factor (*Bully-Victim Conflict*) referred to the conflictual relationship between a bully and victim. Contrary to hypotheses, however, a factor attributing the reason for peer victimization to characteristics of the bully did not emerge. This may have been due to the age of the sample, as few studies have evaluated this type of attribution in middle to late childhood (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). Children appear to assign more blame to the bully as they get older, perhaps indicating an increased understanding of the bully's motivation (i.e., bully has something to gain) and/or a decreased tolerance for victimization with age (Frisén, Holmqvist, & Oscarsson, 2008). Alternatively, it is possible that a factor representing characteristics of the bully did not emerge because too few items (6) depicting characteristics of a bully were included in the BAS. In addition, it is also possible that the items that were selected to assess characteristics of the bully did not adequately capture children's perceptions of a bully at this age. Future studies on bullying attributions may want to consider examining bully-related reasons associated with social positioning, for example, in more detail (Thornberg, 2010).

It is also important to note that items loading on to *Victim Otherness* and *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* attribute a child's victimization to deviance from the social norm in a presumably negative direction. Although some prior research suggests that children see desirable aspects of themselves or others as reasons for bullying (e.g., downward social comparisons, Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Clifford, 2013; Guerra et al., 2011; Thornberg, 2010), BAS items referring to positive differences between a victim and their peers (i.e., bullied kids are *more* popular than most kids) failed to load strongly onto any factor. While their methods closely resembled those used in the current investigation, Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, et al. (2013) asked children to explain reasons for *their* victimization, not the victimization of children in general. Thus, children's explanations for their own versus others' victimization may

differ, and this shift in perspective may partially explain why items regarding positive victim characteristics, as well as items specific to bully characteristics, did not load onto BAS factors.

Bullying attribution factors were also moderately stable between the fall and spring semester. However, there was some evidence that the stability of the *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* factor depended on children's level of self-reported peer victimization. Higher stability was found for children scoring at or below the mean on self-reported peer victimization. This finding suggests that children struggling with higher levels of peer victimization may be less certain about why children are bullied or their understanding of victimization may evolve from the beginning to the end of the school year. Alternatively, children who are facing low to average levels of peer victimization tend to hold more stable attributions for why children are bullied.

Concurrent Validity of the BAS

The following section further describes the content of each factor, as well as concurrent associations with variables of interest as they relate to construct validity. Longitudinal associations between bullying attribution factors and measures of peer victimization, bullying, bystander behavior, and internalizing symptoms are presented in the following section.

Victim Otherness. The attribution *Victim Otherness* is in line with numerous qualitative studies citing a victim's deviance from the norm as the most common reason children are victimized by peers (Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Thornberg, 2010; Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). More specifically, a victim's physical appearance, such as their wardrobe, seems to be particularly relevant to children's bullying attributions (Horowitz et al., 2004; Varjas et al., 2008; Frisé et al., 2008), which again is reflected in the majority of items on *Victim Otherness*. While associations with demographic variables were not initially

included in hypotheses regarding bullying attributions, several of the items on *Victim Otherness* describe demographic features that were assessed in the current study. For example, two items on this factor reference a victim's socioeconomic status (e.g., “*Bullied kids have less money than most kids*”), and results suggest that children from less affluent families experience more victimization per both self-and teacher reports in the fall and spring. Interestingly, income did not predict peer-reports of victimization. An additional item on *Victim Otherness* referenced racial differences as a reason for bullying; however, results suggest that White students (the majority) were more likely than minority students to be nominated as victims by their peers in the spring.

Victim Otherness positively predicted self-reported bullying and, at the trend level, negatively predicted positive bystander behavior in the fall. Consistent with moral disengagement strategies (Bandura, 1999; Thornberg & Jungert, 2014), this suggests that children who reported engaging in bullying behaviors were more likely to attribute peer victimization to a victim's deviation from the norm. Self-identified bullies may point to a child's differentness as an explanation for their behavior or their feelings toward a victim. Moreover, this factor was not significantly associated with teacher- or peer-reported bullying in the fall, suggesting that *Victim Otherness* may be a particularly salient justification for children readily acknowledging their own bullying behavior (at least in the beginning of the school year).

Victim Otherness also predicted self-reported internalizing symptoms in the fall, but was unrelated to peer victimization. Perhaps for non-victimized children who observe their peers being victimized for the overtly identifiable features described in this factor that are mostly beyond the victim's control (e.g., race), this promotes feelings of helplessness amongst their peers. Among 10-12 year-old children, for example, Huitsing et al. (2012) found that children in

classrooms with clearly visible victims (i.e., children nominated as victims by many peers) reported more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem regardless of their own victimization experiences. They argue that in addition to possibly feeling distressed at witnessing the same child being targeted, children may also feel guilty for not intervening on behalf of the victim (Huitsing, Veenstra, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2012). Albeit small, the negative association between *Victim Otherness* and positive bystander behavior suggests that children endorsing this kind of attribution may not intervene and possibly experience some internal distress at not doing so.

Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness. Similar to *Victim Otherness*, the second factor that emerged also attributed a child's victimization to a perceived difference between the child and the larger peer group. The items capturing the factor *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*, however, attributed peer victimization to outward displays of negative emotionality (e.g., crying) and interest in academic pursuits rather than to physical or overt characteristics of the victim. While perhaps somewhat disparate at first glance, emotional sensitivity and a proclivity for academics may share a certain "vulnerability" in common. Children who are emotionally vulnerable or studious may be perceived by peers as weak or incapable of responding effectively to peer aggression, making them easy targets for peer harassment or bullying (Guerra et al., 2011). The two items on this factor describing the victim's mood are in line with previous research linking internalizing symptoms to peer victimization (e.g., Reijntjes et al., 2010; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Boivin, Petitclerc, Feng, & Barker, 2010). Indeed, in the current investigation, bivariate correlations revealed that internalizing symptoms were positively associated with self- and teacher-reported victimization. The remaining two items refer to a victim's academic orientation. While poor academic outcomes have been shown to be a consequence of victimization (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010), few quantitative studies have

investigated a child's academic achievement or interest as a risk factor for victimization (Lehman, 2015). In one of the few studies to examine these constructs, Lehman (2015) found that male high school sophomores reported experiencing more victimization as GPA and hours spent on homework increased. Moreover, poor academic performance has been shown to predict bullying—not being a victim (Cook et al., 2010).

Similar to *Victim Otherness*, self-reported bullying was positively correlated with *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* in the fall, providing some additional evidence for a self-serving bias amongst bullies (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). Bullies may externalize the blame to the victim, thereby alleviating any moral tension resulting from their aggressive behavior. However, regression models revealed that this factor was not uniquely associated with concurrent levels of victimization or bullying via any report source. *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* was unrelated to internalizing symptoms, which was somewhat unexpected in light of the finding that *Victim Otherness* was positively associated with internalizing symptoms. While speculative, it is possible that the extent to which children view characteristics or behaviors of a child as controllable may influence their level of distress associated with holding a particular attribution for why children succumb to peer victimization. Indeed, prior research suggests that characterological self-blame, more so than behavioral self-blame, is associated with poor psychosocial functioning, presumably due to the uncontrollable aspects of the self (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Graham, Bellmore, & Mize, 2006). Children may perceive emotional sensitivity or the pursuit of academic interests, for example, as more controllable than characteristics such as race or physical appearance. Attributing a child's victimization to characteristics perceived as within the victim's control may allow children to distance themselves from the emotional distress associated with blaming a victim for their plight. Nonetheless, future studies examining

bullying attributions should also consider measuring the extent to which children believe certain traits are the victim's fault and/or are amenable to change, as previous studies have shown that children's reactions to peer characteristics are related to assumptions of responsibility (Barnett, Sonnentag, Livengood, Struble, & Wadian, 2012).

Bully-Victim Conflict. The attribution that children are bullied due to bully-victim conflict was the 3rd factor to emerge from the EFA. The content of this factor is consistent with prior research suggesting a mutual animosity between children who bully and their victims (Rodkin, Hanish, Wang, & Logis, 2014), as well as with research describing antipathy as a reason for why bullying occurs (Smith et al., 2004). Given it was expected that factors related to attributions describing the bully would be positively associated with bystander behavior, the finding that *Bully-Victim Conflict* was unrelated to positive bystander behavior was somewhat contrary to expectations. In fact, no significant concurrent associations with this factor (correlations or regressions) emerged. While these null findings warrant further investigation, it is possible that bystanders may not feel a strong need to intervene if they perceive the bullying to be the result of a mutual conflict, even if the two children involved are characterized by a power imbalance. Given this was the highest endorsed factor, but mostly unrelated to variables of peer victimization or bullying, *Bully-Victim Conflict* may be an explanation for peer victimization that is agreed upon by all children.

Predictive Validity of the BAS

While it was hypothesized that endorsing attributions describing victim characteristics would be positively associated with changes in peer victimization and internalizing symptoms, particularly for those children with a history of victimization, the current investigation found no evidence that *Victim Otherness or Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* was associated with

changes in these variables over time. Making the attribution that children are victimized because their characteristics or behaviors violate some social norm does not appear to increase risk for peer victimization or internalizing symptoms across the school year. Other researchers have found self-blaming attributions to be associated with both internalizing distress and victimization, although these investigations have focused on children's attributions in reference to themselves (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Prinstein et al., 2005; Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2013; Schacter, White, Chang, & Juvonen, 2015). Despite the link between making internal attributions for negative situations and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Abramson et al., 1989), the attributions described in *Victim Otherness/Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness* may simply not be internalized by the children that endorsed them. It is possible that even victimized children believe other children are bullied for reasons described in both factors, but do not believe the same reasons account for their own victimization. Looking at the discrepancies between children's interpretations of their own victimization experiences versus their interpretation of others represents an important direction for future research.

Analyses examining longitudinal associations between attributions and bullying behavior were largely exploratory, yet yielded some interesting results. *Victim Otherness* failed to predict self-reported bullying in the spring (despite the significant association in the fall), but positively predicted teacher-reported bullying in the spring. Believing children are victimized due to their "otherness" may not influence self-reported perceptions of bullying long-term, but it appears that children holding this attribution are perceived by their teachers as engaging in more bullying behavior over time. Furthermore, the relation between *Victim Otherness* and peer-reported bullying in the spring was moderated by self-reported peer victimization. Children who attributed a child's peer victimization to being different from peer group members were more

likely to be nominated by peers as a bully in the spring, but only when they scored high on self-reported peer victimization in the fall. As noted above, however, attribution theory suggests that attributing victimization to internal, stable, and uncontrollable factors increases risk for poor intrapsychic outcomes (Abramson, et al., 1989; Graham & Juvonen, 1998), and certainly many of the items on *Victim Otherness* (i.e., family income, race, religion) describe personal characteristics that a victimized child cannot change. Given *Victim Otherness* predicted future bullying rather than victimization or internalizing symptoms, it may be that holding this attribution is particularly aggravating for children who are victimized and believe others (and possibly themselves) are victimized for reasons associated with their social identity that are beyond their control. In response to this frustration, it is possible that victimized children then react to real or perceived peer hostility with aggressive behavior. This finding may shed light on one mechanism that explains how victims of peer aggression become more aggressive over time (Rodkin, Hanish, Wang, & Logis, 2014). Peer victimization may intensify hostile attributions or promote hostile attribution biases, thereby leading to more aggressive behavior and subsequent peer victimization (Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2013).

Although no concurrent associations between bullying or peer victimization and *Bully-Victim Conflict* were found, *Bully-Victim Conflict* emerged as a prospective predictor of both bullying and peer victimization in the spring. Children who attributed peer victimization to mutual antipathy between bullies and their victims were more likely to be seen by peers as a bully and less likely to be seen by peers as a victim at the end of the school year. There was also evidence that peer victimization moderated the association between *Bully-Victim Conflict* and self-reported bullying behavior in the spring. Children who scored higher on *Bully-Victim Conflict* were less likely to report engaging in bullying behavior when they scored low on self-

reported peer victimization, but were more likely to report bullying behavior when they scored high on self-reported peer victimization. Taken together, this may suggest that believing bullying occurs due to the nature of the bully-victim relationship may exacerbate bullying over time, especially for those scoring high on self-reported peer victimization in the fall. The conflict or animosity within these bully-victim dyads may worsen, or at least remain consistent, throughout the course of the school year, and thus children engaged in these relationships as a victim may become more and more aggressive over time.

Group Differences in BAS Factors by Bully-Victim Status

An additional aim of the study was to examine mean-level differences in bullying attributions based on membership in one of four groups: bully-only, victim-only, bully-victim, and uninvolved as a bully, victim, or bully-victim. Consistent with prior literature, the majority of children in the current investigation fell into the uninvolved category (Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2008; Perren, Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, Malti, & Hymel, 2012). The only significant finding to emerge was a mean-level difference between the victim-only and uninvolved group on *Victim Otherness*. Children in the victim-only group scored higher on *Victim Otherness* than those in the uninvolved group, but the victim-only group did not differ from the bully-only or bully-victim groups on this factor. Other studies have found that victimized children make self-blaming attributions (for either positive or negative reasons; Visconti, Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Clifford, 2013), and therefore it makes sense that victims may endorse victim-related attributions slightly more than uninvolved children. However, results are in contrast to two other studies that have investigated attributional differences among bully-victim groups. For instance, in a sample of Greek 6th graders, Georgiou and Stavrinides (2008) found that bully-victims, compared to groups of bully-only, victim-only, or uninvolved children, scored higher on peer violence

attributions specific to a victim. Attributions were measured via responses to statements like, “*If child A teases child B, this is because...*,” and bully-victims were more likely to respond with victim-related attributions, such as “*child B deserves it*” (Georgiou & Stavriniades, 2008).

Additionally, among 15-16 year-olds in Sweden, Thornberg and Knutsen (2011) found that bullies were more likely to blame to the victim for their harassment compared to victims, bully-victims, or bystanders. This was measured via an open-ended question asking adolescents to explain why they thought bullying occurs, and responses were categorized based on content.

Discrepancies in results between these studies and the current study may be due to the differences in attribution measurement. Moreover, the size of the bully-victim groups in the current sample were small and this could have attenuated findings. However, the lack of significant differences among groups may suggest that children are at a general consensus as to what characteristics of a victim or aspects of the bully-victim relationship place children at risk for victimization, regardless of their involvement in the process.

Associations with Race. In addition, minority students endorsed *Victim Otherness* at significantly higher levels than did White students. While not an initial focus of the current study, several interesting associations including race emerged that are worth noting in the context of this finding. Regression analyses controlling for other demographic variables and attributions revealed that minority students were more likely to self-report bullying behaviors and be seen as demonstrating bullying behaviors by teachers in the fall. However, in the spring, minority students were less likely than White students to demonstrate positive bystander behavior per teacher-report, endorse internalizing symptoms via self-report, or be perceived as victims by peers. Taken together, minority children tend to attribute bullying to a victim’s difference from

peers, but are less likely to be seen as victims and more likely to be associated with bullying behaviors across report sources.

When considering these findings as well as the finding that *Victim Otherness* predicted bullying over time for peer victimized children, it seems as though citing aspects of a child's social identity as a reason for peer victimization is potentially an internal *and* external attribution. Race, for example, is an internal and stable characteristic beyond one's control. On the other hand, being treated in a certain way *because* of one's racial identity points to the prejudice of others—making this an external reason (also often stable and beyond one's control) for one's victimization. Research suggests that victimized children of an ethnic minority are less likely to attribute their victimization to their character but rather to the prejudice of peers (Graham, Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009), which could in part explain why *Victim Otherness* did not predict changes in peer victimization.

Summary

Findings from the current study suggest that children attribute victimization to the victim's deviance from the norm, such as the victimized child's physical appearance, social identity, academic focus, or mood. These results can be viewed in the context of the person-group similarity model, which suggests that the relation between an individual's behavior or personality and their social status (e.g., rejection) is mediated by the degree of similarity between that individual and the peer group (Wright, Giammarino, & Parad, 1986; Boivin, Dodge, & Coie, 1995). Children that fail to conform to group norms are at risk for aggression from their peers (Faris & Felmlee, 2014). In line with this, the few significant findings to emerge with attributions describing victim characteristics were mostly related to bullying behaviors. *Victim Otherness* positively predicted self-reported bullying in the fall and teacher-reported bullying in the spring.

And, for those children who were victimized and possibly *unable* to conform to the norm (e.g., due to demographic features like race or income), endorsing *Victim Otherness* increased peers' perceptions of their bullying behavior over time. Being unable, or refusing, to assimilate with the peer group may exacerbate marginalized children's hostility towards peers and thereby place them at continued risk for victimization.

The nature of the bully-victim relationship was the bullying attribution factor most highly endorsed by children, and endorsing this attribution was also associated with bullying behaviors. *Bully-Victim Conflict* positively predicted peer-reported bullying, as well as self-reported bullying (depending on a child's level of victimization), over time. On the other hand, *Bully-Victim Conflict* negatively predicted peer-reported victimization in the spring. Few other associations were found between endorsing different types of attributions and levels of peer victimization.

In addition, the current study found limited evidence that the endorsement of bully attribution factors varied as a function of bully-victim status. While results revealed that children in the victim-only group endorsed *Victim Otherness* at slightly higher rates than the uninvolved group, few other significant differences emerged based on a child's bully-victim status. This finding suggests a general consensus among children about the factors that place children at risk for peer victimization regardless of their involvement in the process. However, the lack of significant findings between children's endorsement of attributions and peer victimization, internalizing symptoms, and bystander behavior was in contrast to prior research and these associations warrant further investigation. Most studies examining bullying attributions and related outcomes have asked children to explain victimization in reference to themselves, and this shift in perspective may explain some of the null findings. The majority of children in the

current study were not involved in bullying as either the victim or aggressor, and thus their bullying attributions were presumably based on observations and perceptions of this process from an outside perspective. Some portion of bullying episodes occurring in front of uninvolved peers may be perceived as benign rather than victimization, such as children “just joking around” (Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). Even children who are victims may attribute others’ victimization to the harassment they observe publicly, but explain their own victimization based on factors known only to them and the perpetrator(s).

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has several strengths worth noting. First, the BAS addressed several gaps in the literature regarding children’s explanations for bullying. To my knowledge, this was the first quantitative evaluation of content-specific attributions children make for why other children are victimized. Data were also collected at multiple time points from multiple sources, which permitted the examination of how bullying attributions relate to measures of peer victimization, bullying, internalizing symptoms, and bystander behavior over time. The use of different informants, as well as the inclusion of multiple control (e.g., demographic) variables, provided a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of children’s involvement in peer victimization.

There are also several limitations in the current study that need discussion. The number of participants in the bully-only and bully-victim group was small, reducing statistical power to detect significant effects. In addition, the cut-offs for classifying children as victims, bullies, or bully-victims were guided by previous research but are still somewhat arbitrary. Future studies should use procedures that examine children’s trajectories on peer victimization measured over time to better account for the heterogeneity of peer victimization and bullying within groups

(e.g., group-modeling procedures; Boivin et al., 2010). Few significant associations were also found between attributions and bystander behavior, which may have been partially due to the measurement of positive bystander behavior. This construct was only measured through teacher-report, and it is possible that item wording (e.g., “*(The child) reported to staff that someone was bullied.*”) confounded bystander behavior with more general involvement in bullying.

Additionally, teachers’ perceptions of those involved in bullying may differ from their students (Ahn, Gest, & Rodkin, 2013), and therefore it is important that future studies collect self- or peer-reported measures of bystander behavior to corroborate the findings from the current investigation based on teacher report.

This study also raises a number of additional questions. In order to determine temporal relations between attributions and outcomes, it will be important to look at whether early peer victimization experiences contribute to the development of certain attributions and whether these factors remain stable across longer periods of time. Future work should also examine the extent to which the attributions that children provide for why other children are bullied align with the reasons they give for their own peer victimization experiences. This may provide insight into whether children have an accurate understanding for why they are the victims of bullying compared to the reasons they attribute to their peers.

In addition, future studies will need to confirm the factor structure of the BAS in different samples. Researchers should also consider including more items related to bully-characteristics only, as it is possible that a factor associated with aspects of the bully may emerge when children are presented with a larger item pool. Also, given one *Bully-Victim Conflict* item was specific to the bully and the remaining three referenced both the victim *and* bully, children may have conflated items describing the bully-victim dyad with specific characteristics of the bully.

Including more items describing characteristics of a bully could help tease apart attributions related to the bully-victim dyad from those related specifically to characteristics of a bully.

Clinical Implications

In general, results of the current investigation are congruent with research indicating that children tend to believe characteristics of the victim are to blame for their harassment. Measures used to assess peer victimization rarely examine the specific reasons for bullying, which is particularly important for intervention work (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). More specifically, attributions regarding physical characteristics of the victim are seldom mentioned in discussions surrounding risk factors for peer abuse (e.g., Cook et al., 2010), and certain traits may be more provocative than others. For example, after reviewing descriptions of hypothetical male peers, Barnett et al. (2012) found that children were more likely to indicate that specific (presumably undesirable) peer characteristics, such as obesity or aggression as opposed to shyness, were the fault of the hypothetical peer, and children anticipated more negative interactions with peers possessing these specific characteristics (Barnett et al., 2012). Future research and intervention efforts may want to place a particular focus on victim traits perceived to be under the victim's control. Thus, it is recommended that bullying attributions be assessed in conjunction with assumptions of responsibility or perceived control.

It is also important that school personnel be aware of any potential physical or demographic features that place certain groups of children at risk for victimization in order to focus their preventative efforts. Interventions, for example, designed to combat bullying due to a child's social identity (e.g., religion, race) will likely need to be different from programs designed to target harassment due to a child's interest in academics (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). Moreover, results suggested that children's reasons for why other children are bullied were

largely independent of their own bully-victim status, indicating that there may be a consensus among children as to what factors place children at risk for victimization. Thus, it is important that teachers and school administrators recognize bullying as a cultural phenomenon constructed by the peer group and be mindful of the specific factors that make a child “different” within that context. In sum, intervention efforts must take individual- and contextual-level predictors, such as classroom factors (Isaacs, Voeten, & Salmivalli, 2013), into consideration (Cook et al., 2010).

Results also suggested that children perceive conflict between the bully and victim as a reason for victimization, and endorsing this type of attribution may increase bullying over time. Considering this, as well as the finding that most items describing bully characteristics as reasons for victimization failed to load strongly onto any factor, interventions may need to educate children (particularly non-victimized youth) on who is responsible for bullying in order to facilitate bystander engagement (Batanova et al., 2014). Moreover, this education needs to occur early on, as younger children are more likely to intervene than older children (Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse, & Neale, 2010), and children’s social reputation and peer victimization experiences become stable across middle to late childhood (Boivin et al., 2010). In terms of intervening with the bully specifically, intervention efforts to arouse empathy for the victim, as well as condemn bully *behavior* (rather than blame the bully), have been positively associated with bullies’ reports of their intention to stop bullying (Garandeau, Vartio, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2016). Challenging bullies’ attributions for peer victimization (e.g., the victim is “different,” the victim is my “enemy”) may foster empathy and discourage ongoing provocation.

In sum, anti-bullying programs should not only promote peer intervention, but address children’s tendency to attribute blame to the victim or bully-victim dyad as well. School-wide interventions that both stimulate teacher-awareness of bullying and emphasize positive peer

support for victims have shown some promise in terms of improving victim well-being (e.g., KiVa anti-bullying program; Juvonen, Schacter, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2016); better understanding the role of children's bullying attributions may help facilitate teacher and peer engagement in more targeted, and ultimately more effective, ways.

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Appendix

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics for Primary Study Variables

Variables	Fall		Spring	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	9.16	.63	-	-
Self-reported Bullying	.24	.44	.20	.42
Self-reported Victimization	.91	.96	.88	.98
Peer-reported Bullying	-.11	.84	-.12	.86
Peer-reported Victimization	-.00	.98	-.01	.96
Teacher-reported Bullying	.29	.55	.37	.66
Teacher-reported Victimization	.31	.49	.29	.44
Teacher-reported Bystander Behavior	.57	.76	.71	.83
Self-reported Internalizing Symptoms	2.29	.68	2.19	.65
<i>Victim Otherness</i>	1.59	.75	1.58	.80
<i>Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness</i>	2.02	1.27	2.04	.96
<i>Bully-Victim Conflict</i>	2.64	.86	2.54	.86

Table 2. Correlations among Primary Study Variables at Time 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Age	-														
2. Gender	.11*	-													
3. Race	.09	.08	-												
4. Income	.10	.09	.34**	-											
5. Bully- Self	.01	.04	-.20**	-.17**	-										
6. Victim- Self	.00	.04	-.05	-.27**	.33**	-									
7. Bully- Peer	.07	.10	-.07	-.09	.24**	.18*	-								
8. Victim- Peer	.04	.01	-.05	-.04	.08	.30**	.24**	-							
9. Bully- Teacher	-.04	-.02	-.20**	-.23**	.26**	.16**	.34**	.00	-						
10. Victim- Teacher	.09	-.04	-.07	-.17**	.17*	.36**	.18**	.32**	.34**	-					
11. BySt- Teacher	-.04	-.10*	-.08	-.14**	-.06	.10*	-.05	.08	.04	.31*	-				
12. Internal Sx	-.04	-.03	-.17**	-.33**	.20**	.33**	.05	.10	.14*	.16**	.09	-			
13. Factor 1	.03	.00	-.09	-.01	.19*	.10	.01	-.04	.07	-.00	-.07	.17**	-		
14. Factor 2	-.04	-.09	-.06	-.01	.14*	.05	.04	.06	.04	-.00	-.01	.04	.37**	-	
15. Factor 3	.03	-.06	-.01	-.04	.00	.09	.02	.01	.04	.03	.03	.05	.35**	.30**	-
16. Intervention	.04	.02	-.05	-.23**	.28**	.78**	.17*	.28**	.22**	.53**	.14*	.28**	.05	.03	.05

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Internal Sx = Self-reported Internalizing Symptoms, Byst = Positive Bystander Behavior, White (Race) = 1, Male (Gender) = 1, Factor 1 = *Victim Otherness*, Factor 2 = *Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness*, Factor 3 = *Bully-Victim Conflict*.

Table 3. Model fit indices on 1-12 factor models (43 items).

Model	χ^2 (df)	RMSEA (90% CI)	CFI	TLI	SRMR
1-factor	1810.890 (860)	.051	.652	.635	.075
2-factor	1321.663 (818)	.038	.816	.797	.054
3-factor	1150.679 (777)	.034	.863	.841	.047
4-factor	1031.355 (737)	.031	.892	.868	.042
5-factor	994.933 (698)	.032	.891	.859	.039
6-factor	942.651 (660)	.032	.897	.858	.036
7-factor	917.530 (623)	.033	.892	.844	.033
8-factor	912.606 (587)	.036	.881	.817	.031
9-factor	806.198 (552)	.033	.907	.848	.029
10-factor	733.445 (518)	.031	.921	.863	.028
11-factor	672.845 (485)	.030	.931	.872	.025
12-factor	658.381 (453)	.033	.925	.850	.024

Table 4. Factor loadings for 2-factor model (43 items).

Items	F1	F2
1. Bullied kids look different.	.046	.343*
2. Bullied kids do things that are annoying.	-.171*	.439*
3. Kids who bully do so because they want to look cool.	.172*	.273*
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	.079	.379*
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	.108	.329*
6. Bullied kids are shy than most kids.	.457*	.043
7. Kids who bully do so to feel better about themselves.	.247*	.172*
8. Bullied kids are always hanging around the teacher.	.350*	.085
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	.180*	.384*
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	.306*	.216*
11. Bullied kids get better grades than most kids.	.419*	-.134
12. Bullied kids are weak.	.428*	.143
13. Bullied kids have friends that can't stand up for them.	.335*	.207*
14. Bullied kids have less friends than most kids.	.020	.434*
15. Bullied kids are not liked by other kids.	.003	.513*
16. Bullied kids are more popular than other kids.	.096	.082
17. Bullied kids hang out by themselves.	.348*	.069
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	.188	.352*
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	.695*	-.142
20. Bullied kids are better than most kids at sports.	.149	.114
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	.032	.476*
22. Bullied kids get mad easily.	-.151	.631*
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	.186	.530*
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	.579*	.052
25. Bullied kids are friends with kids that nobody likes.	.400*	.248*
26. Bullied kids are quick to fight back when picked on.	-.260*	.542*
27. Bullied kids are too skinny.	.305*	.183
28. Kids who bully do so because they are jealous of the bullied child.	.384*	.193
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	.268*	.383*
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	.712*	-.109
31. Bullied kids always tell the teacher when other kids misbehave.	.306*	.094
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	.733*	-.101
33. Bullied kids have a bad temper.	-.303*	.770*
34. Bullied kids always give in to the bully.	.168	.315*
35. Bullied kids have more money than most kids.	.353*	.042
36. Bullied kids always seem nervous.	.679*	.029
37. Kids who bully are trying to get other kids to not like the bullied child.	.410*	.177
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	.122	.378*
39. Kids who bully are mean to others because they feel bad about themselves.	.330*	.155
40. Bullied kids are friends with kids who also get bullied.	.583*	-.009
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	.206	.304*
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	.041	.414*

Table 4 (continued).

Items	F1	F2
43. Bullied kids would rather talk to the teacher than talk to other kids.	.464*	.171
Factor correlations	F1	F2
F1	-	-
F2	.41*	-

Note. * $p < .05$; Bolded values indicate item met retention criteria.

Table 5. Factor loadings for 3-factor model (43 items).

Items	F1	F2	F3
1. Bullied kids look different.	.461*	-.029	-.094
2. Bullied kids do things that are annoying.	.247*	-.263*	.161
3. Kids who bully do so because they want to look cool.	.222	.053	.181
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	.523*	-.009	-.100
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	.508*	.032	-.126
6. Bullied kids are shy than most kids.	.290*	.375*	-.022
7. Kids who bully do so to feel better about themselves.	.194	.155*	.136
8. Bullied kids are always hanging around the teacher.	.161	.259*	.124
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	.428*	.052	.079
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	.023	.143*	.449*
11. Bullied kids get better grades than most kids.	.117	.385*	-.057
12. Bullied kids are weak.	.375*	.323*	-.007
13. Bullied kids have friends that can't stand up for them.	.351*	.227*	.048
14. Bullied kids have less friends than most kids.	.287*	-.111	.219
15. Bullied kids are not liked by other kids.	.403*	-.137	.167
16. Bullied kids are more popular than other kids.	.180	.069	-.060
17. Bullied kids hang out by themselves.	.187	.261*	.076
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	.575*	.085	-.130
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	.131	.600*	.085
20. Bullied kids are better than most kids at sports.	.133	.089	.073
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	.650*	-.069	-.155
22. Bullied kids get mad easily.	.404*	-.293*	.220
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	.468*	.002	.223
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	.239*	.453*	.131
25. Bullied kids are friends with kids that nobody likes.	.313*	.251*	.181
26. Bullied kids are quick to fight back when picked on.	.277	-.366*	.195
27. Bullied kids are too skinny.	.477*	.242*	-.159
28. Kids who bully do so because they are jealous of the bullied child.	.038	.212*	.435*
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	.470*	.127	.081
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	-.010	.569*	.312
31. Bullied kids always tell the teacher when other kids misbehave.	.061	.195	.238
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	-.014	.582*	.337*
33. Bullied kids have a bad temper.	.647*	-.429*	.013
34. Bullied kids always give in to the bully.	.313*	.050	.127
35. Bullied kids have more money than most kids.	.221*	.288*	.002
36. Bullied kids always seem nervous.	.044	.497*	.402*
37. Kids who bully are trying to get other kids to not like the bullied child.	.028	.232*	.450*
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	.012	-.081	.560*
39. Kids who bully are mean to others because they feel bad about themselves.	.027	.181	.374*
40. Bullied kids are friends with kids who also get bullied.	-.107	.415*	.484*
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	-.115	-.009	.682*
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	.029	-.152	.535*

Table 5 (continued).

Items	F1	F2	F3
43. Bullied kids would rather talk to the teacher than talk to other kids.	-.011	.266*	.525*
Factor correlations	F1	F2	F3
F1	-	-	-
F2	.20	-	-
F3	.60*	.11	-

Note. * $p < .05$; Bolded values indicate item met retention criteria.

Table 6. Factor loadings for 4-factor model (43 items).

Items	F1	F2	F3	F4
1. Bullied kids look different.	.279	.241	.002	-.024
2. Bullied kids do things that are annoying.	.301	.032	.008	.260*
3. Kids who bully do so because they want to look cool.	.315*	-.029	.278*	.062
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	.336	.256	.028	-.046
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	.388	.196	.055	-.111
6. Bullied kids are shy than most kids.	.023	.258*	.284	-.208*
7. Kids who bully do so to feel better about themselves.	.198	.034	.286*	-.017
8. Bullied kids are always hanging around the teacher.	.232*	-.042	.370*	-.112
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	.460*	.060	.251*	-.015
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	-.080	.135	.400*	.248
11. Bullied kids get better grades than most kids.	.038	.053	.273	-.276*
12. Bullied kids are weak.	-.028	.402*	.237	-.130
13. Bullied kids have friends that can't stand up for them.	.073	.298*	.234	-.060
14. Bullied kids have less friends than most kids.	-.153	.493*	.008	.341*
15. Bullied kids are not liked by other kids.	.030	.445*	.015	.291*
16. Bullied kids are more popular than other kids.	.234*	-.028	.087	-.111
17. Bullied kids hang out by themselves.	-.377*	.537*	.132	.007
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	.073	.538*	-.004	-.057
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	-.013	.118	.521*	-.301*
20. Bullied kids are better than most kids at sports.	.221	-.053	.194	-.034
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	.190	.514*	-.102	.020
22. Bullied kids get mad easily.	.279	.236	.016	.350*
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	.347	.224	.273*	.158
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	-.006	.240	.441*	-.154
25. Bullied kids are friends with kids that nobody likes.	-.039	.376*	.306*	.036
26. Bullied kids are quick to fight back when picked on.	.349*	.038	-.035	.342*
27. Bullied kids are too skinny.	.130	.353*	.122	-.199*
28. Kids who bully do so because they are jealous of the bullied child.	.120	-.037	.512*	.143
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	.126	.392*	.196	.035
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	.040	-.064	.683*	-.167
31. Bullied kids always tell the teacher when other kids misbehave.	.081	.003	.346*	.032
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	-.135	.100	.644*	-.111
33. Bullied kids have a bad temper.	.356	.404	-.202*	.327
34. Bullied kids always give in to the bully.	.051	.304*	.142	.104
35. Bullied kids have more money than most kids.	.091	.134	.254	-.166
36. Bullied kids always seem nervous.	-.085	.130	.640*	-.014
37. Kids who bully are trying to get other kids to not like the bullied child.	-.037	.100	.480*	.175
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	.077	.019	.352	.423*
39. Kids who bully are mean to others because they feel bad about themselves.	.050	.011	.421*	.133
40. Bullied kids are friends with kids who also get bullied.	-.028	-.062	.649*	.056
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	-.057	.008	.451*	.473*
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	.186	-.062	.319	.428*

Table 6 (continued).

Items	F1	F2	F3	F4
43. Bullied kids would rather talk to the teacher than talk to other kids.	.050	-.015	.590*	.173
Factor correlations	F1	F2	F3	F4
F1	-	-	-	-
F2	.31*	-	-	-
F3	.15	.46*	-	-
F4	.13	.08	-.06	-

Note. * $p < .05$; Bolded values indicate item met retention criteria.

Table 7. Factor loadings for 3-factor model (22 items).

Items	F1	F2	F3
1. Bullied kids look different.	.420*	-.123	.035
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	.498*	-.060	-.024
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	.525*	.022	-.114
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	.465*	.070	.066
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	-.061	.148*	.498*
15. Bullied kids are not liked by other kids.	.322	-.150	.260
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	.552*	.021	-.051
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	.142	.594*	-.008
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	.632*	-.127	-.057
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	.459*	.024	.249
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	.243*	.496*	.051
27. Bullied kids are too skinny.	.439*	.165	-.124
28. Kids who bully do so because they are jealous of the bullied child.	.063	.234*	.319*
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	.473*	.126	.052
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	-.011	.621*	.187
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	.010	.624*	.170
33. Bullied kids have a bad temper.	.539*	-.422*	.185
37. Kids who bully are trying to get other kids to not like the bullied child.	.048	.263*	.362*
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	.003	-.022	.552*
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	-.166	.006	.777*
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	.028	-.128	.558*
43. Bullied kids would rather talk to the teacher than talk to other kids.	.005	.330*	.439*
Factor correlations	F1	F2	F3
F1	-	-	-
F2	.31*	-	-
F3	.54	.23	-

Note. * $p < .05$; Bolded values indicate item met retention criteria.

Table 8. Factor loadings for 3-factor model (17 items).

Items	F1	F2	F3
1. Bullied kids look different.	.458*	-.126	.058
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	.530*	-.078	.001
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	.576*	-.021	-.101
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	.467*	.107	.055
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	.010	.196*	.447*
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	.479*	.081	-.024
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	.075	.647*	-.036
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	.561*	-.069	-.027
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	.527*	.039	.218*
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	.182	.566*	.006
27. Bullied kids are too skinny.	.363*	.212	-.123
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	.445*	.162	.033
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	-.011	.636*	.101
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	-.005	.663*	.066
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	.133	-.005	.475*
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	-.025	.014	.776*
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	.138	-.081	.459*
Factor correlations	F1	F2	F3
F1	-	-	-
F2	.36*	-	-
F3	.34*	.26*	-

Note. * $p < .05$; Bolded values indicate item met retention criteria.

Table 9. Factor loadings for 3-factor model (16 items).

Items	F1	F2	F3
1. Bullied kids look different.	.474*	-.116	.029
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	.526*	-.068	-.014
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	.614*	-.007	-.152
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	.475*	.120	.032
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	.468*	.100	-.034
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	.531*	-.052	-.027
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	.530*	.053	.197*
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	.443*	.178	.017
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	.078	.655*	-.048
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	.177	.571*	.001
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	-.010	.635*	.097
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	-.004	.662*	.064
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	.002	.188*	.461*
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	.150	-.003	.459*
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	-.013	.011	.762*
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	.135	-.090	.466*
Factor correlations	F1	F2	F3
F1	-	-	-
F2	.35*	-	-
F3	.37*	.27	-

Note. F1 = *Victim Otherness*; F2 = *Victim Sensitivity and Studiosness*; F3 = *Bully-Victim Conflict*. Factor loadings in bold represent an item's primary factor. * $p < .05$.

Table 10. Mean Statistics for Final BAS Items (N = 419).

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<u><i>Victim Otherness</i></u>		
1. Bullied kids look different.	1.73	1.37
4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.	1.37	1.26
5. Bullied kids are overweight.	1.38	1.25
9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.	1.67	1.26
18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.	1.72	1.19
21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.	1.48	1.22
23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.	1.73	1.23
29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.	1.72	1.24
<u><i>Victim Sensitivity and Studiousness</i></u>		
19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.	1.80	1.31
24. Bullied kids cry a lot.	1.85	1.35
30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.	2.27	1.37
32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.	2.27	1.34
<u><i>Bully-Victim Conflict</i></u>		
10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.	2.91	1.21
38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.	2.79	1.16
41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.	2.78	1.19
42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.	2.04	1.26

Table 11. Summary of Regression Analyses for BAS Factors Predicting Self-reported Variables at Time 1 (N = 481)

Predictor	Victimization				Bullying				Internalizing Symptoms			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Victim Otherness	.09	.08	.07	.25	.10*	.04	.17	.01	.16*	.05	.17	.00
Victim Sensitivity & Studiousness	.01	.06	.01	.94	.04	.02	.10	.09	-.02	.04	-.02	.70
Bully-Victim Conflict	.06	.06	.06	.29	-.04	.03	-.09	.10	-.02	.03	-.02	.65
Gender	.15	.10	.08	.13	.06	.05	.06	.26	.00	.06	.00	.97
Age	-.01	.08	-.00	.95	.01	.04	.02	.69	-.02	.06	-.02	.73
Income	-.18*	.03	-.34	.00	-.04*	.01	-.15	.00	-.12*	.02	-.32	.00
Race	.14	.11	.06	.20	-.14*	.06	-.14	.01	-.07	.07	-.05	.33

Note. * $p < .05$. Self-reported victimization, bullying, and internalizing symptoms were ran in separate models.

Table 12. Summary of Regression Analyses for BAS Factors Predicting Teacher-reported Variables at Time 1 (N = 482)

Predictor	Victimization				Bullying				Positive Bystander Behavior			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Victim Otherness	-.02	.04	-.03	.59	.03	.05	.04	.55	-.10	.05	-.10	.07
Victim Sensitivity & Studiousness	-.00	.03	-.01	.93	.01	.03	.01	.84	-.00	.05	-.01	.94
Bully-Victim Conflict	.01	.04	.01	.85	.00	.03	.00	.95	.04	.06	.05	.47
Gender	-.03	.05	-.03	.51	.01	.06	.01	.86	-.13	.08	-.09	.08
Age	.08	.05	.11	.09	-.01	.06	-.01	.85	-.02	.09	-.01	.86
Income	-.05*	.01	-.16	.00	-.06*	.02	-.17	.00	-.05	.03	-.11	.09
Race	-.02	.05	-.02	.72	-.17*	.07	-.14	.03	-.06	.08	-.04	.44

Note. * $p < .05$. Teacher-reported victimization, bullying, and bystander behavior were ran in separate models.

Table 13. Summary of Regression Analyses for BAS Factors Predicting Peer-reported Variables at Time 1 (N = 481)

Predictor	Victimization				Bullying			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Victim Otherness	-.09	.08	-.07	.27	-.04	.11	-.04	.70
Victim Sensitivity & Studiousness	.07	.05	.07	.22	.04	.06	.05	.44
Bully-Victim Conflict	-.00	.07	-.00	.99	.00	.06	.00	.96
Gender	.03	.13	.02	.79	.19	.10	.11	.06
Age	.08	.08	.05	.30	.13	.09	.10	.14
Income	-.01	.03	-.01	.81	-.03	.02	-.07	.12
Race	-.11	.17	-.05	.52	-.09	.10	-.05	.41

Note. * $p < .05$. Peer-reported victimization and bullying were ran in separate models.

Table 14. Summary of Regression Analyses for BAS Factors Predicting Self-reported Variables at Time 2 ($N = 482$)

Predictor	Victimization				Bullying				Internalizing Symptoms			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Victim Otherness	.01	.05	.01	.80	-.02	.03	-.04	.50	.05	.05	.06	.25
Victim Sensitivity & Studiousness	-.04	.04	-.04	.42	.02	.02	.05	.37	-.03	.04	-.05	.34
Bully-Victim Conflict	.05	.06	.04	.39	.01	.03	.01	.79	.00	.04	.00	1.00
Outcome at T1	.69*	.08	.66	.00	.51*	.09	.54	.00	.49*	.06	.50	.00
Gender	-.16	.09	-.08	.08	.03	.03	.04	.30	-.07	.05	-.05	.21
Age	-.16*	.07	-.10	.02	-.01	.03	-.01	.86	-.07	.06	-.06	.24
Income	-.06*	.03	-.10	.02	-.02	.01	-.07	.15	-.03	.02	-.09	.08
Race	.19	.11	.09	.08	-.05	.05	-.05	.31	.16*	.08	.11	.05
Intervention Status	-.36*	.16	-.14	.02	-.03	.05	-.03	.51	-.13	.09	-.08	.14

Note. * $p < .05$. Self-reported victimization, bullying, and internalizing symptoms were ran in separate models.

Table 15. Summary of Regression Analyses for BAS Factors Predicting Teacher-reported Variables at Time 2 ($N = 482$)

Predictor	Victimization				Bullying				Positive Bystander Behavior			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Victim Otherness	.04	.03	.07	.17	.07*	.03	.08	.02	-.04	.06	-.04	.50
Victim Sensitivity & Studiousness	.00	.02	-.00	.99	-.01	.03	-.02	.75	.00	.04	.00	1.00
Bully-Victim Conflict	-.03	.03	-.06	.18	-.01	.04	-.01	.89	.03	.06	.03	.67
Outcome at T1	.37*	.11	.40	.00	.79*	.08	.65	.00	.58*	.09	.54	.00
Gender	.00	.05	.00	1.00	.04	.05	.03	.46	-.06	.06	-.04	.36
Age	-.04	.04	-.05	.37	-.11*	.04	-.10	.02	-.09	.10	-.07	.33
Income	-.03*	.02	-.13	.03	-.00	.02	-.01	.86	-.04	.04	-.08	.31
Race	.01	.04	.01	.88	-.13	.09	-.09	.16	.21*	.09	.11	.02
Intervention Status	.15	.09	.13	.10	.10	.07	.06	.17	-.04	.10	-.02	.70

Note. * $p < .05$. Teacher-reported victimization, bullying, and bystander behavior were ran in separate models.

Table 16. Summary of Regression Analyses for BAS Factors Predicting Peer-reported Variables at Time 2 (N = 482)

Predictor	Victimization				Bullying			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Victim Otherness</i>	.11	.07	.08	.11	.04	.06	.03	.54
<i>Victim Sensitivity & Studiousness</i>	-.03	.04	-.04	.38	.04	.05	.04	.43
<i>Bully-Victim Conflict</i>	-.14*	.05	-.12	.00	.10*	.05	.10	.05
<i>Outcome at T1</i>	.47*	.07	.48	.00	.60*	.07	.59	.00
<i>Gender</i>	-.18	.10	-.09	.07	.25*	.07	.15	.00
<i>Age</i>	-.09	.05	-.06	.11	-.03	.05	-.02	.53
<i>Income</i>	-.02	.03	-.04	.35	-.01	.02	-.03	.54
<i>Race</i>	.18*	.09	.09	.03	-.09	.07	-.05	.23
<i>Intervention Status</i>	.03	.09	.01	.73	-.09	.09	-.04	.30

Note. * $p < .05$. Peer-reported victimization and bullying were ran in separate models.

Figure 1.

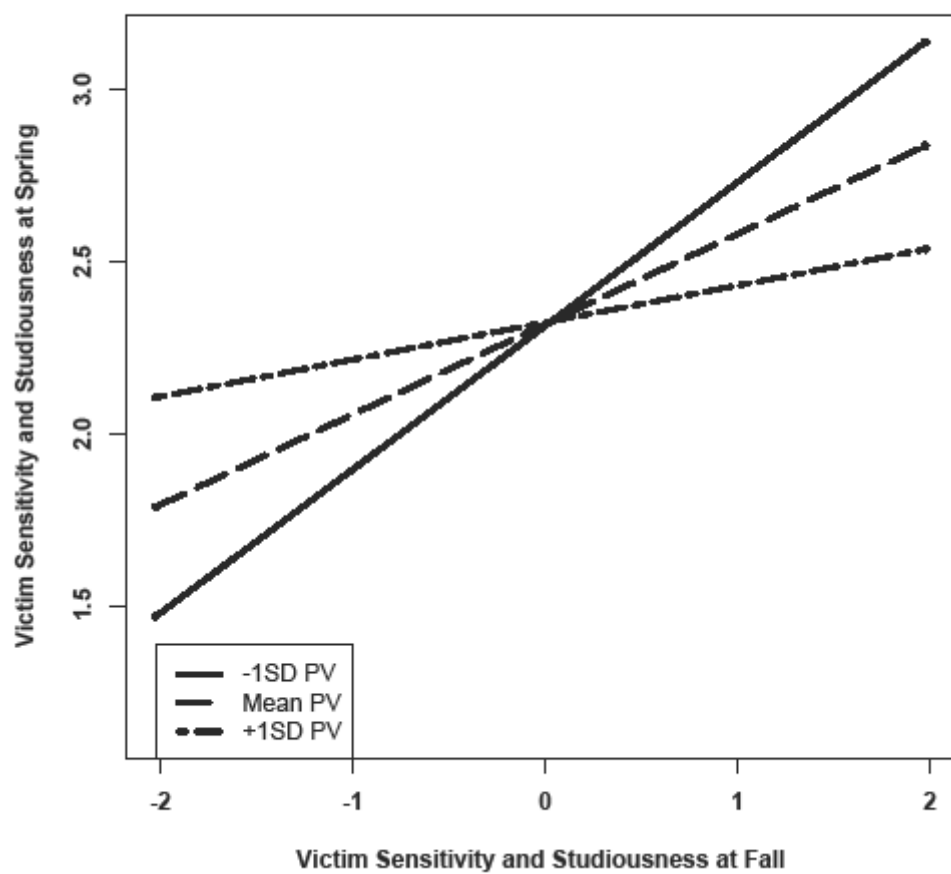


Figure 1.

Figure 2.

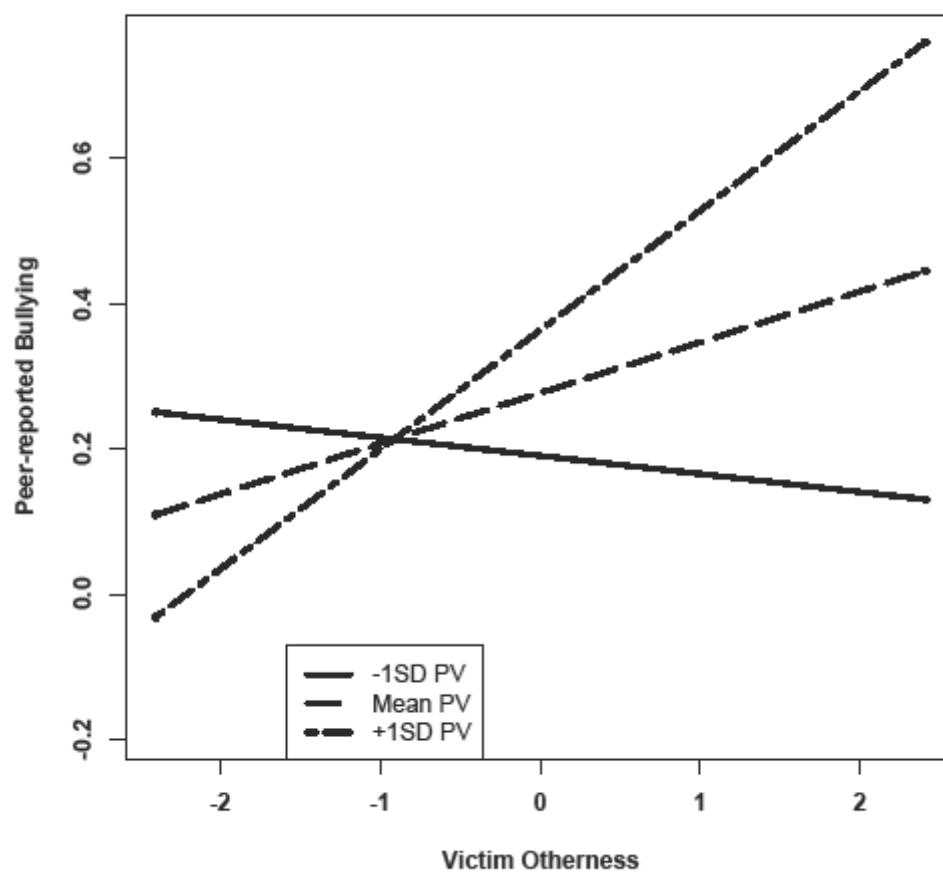


Figure 2.

Figure 3.

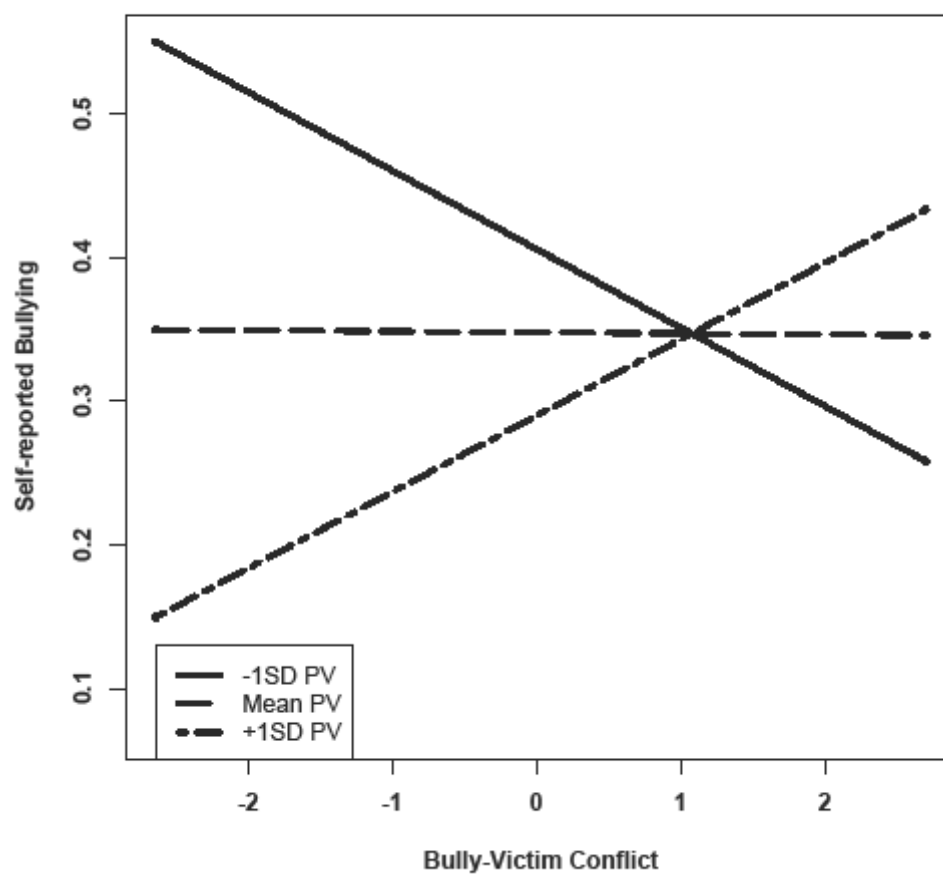


Figure 3.

BAS

Listed below are reasons why some kids are bullied. Circle the number that tells us how true you think each reason is for why kids are bullied. **All responses are voluntary.**

Then, go to the next line that says, “This could be a reason why I was bullied.” If you think that you were bullied because of the reason described above, then please circle “YES”. If you were bullied, but not for the reason described above, then circle “NO”. If you are not bullied, then circle “Not Bullied”.

1. Bullied kids look different.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

2. Bullied kids do things that are annoying.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

3. Kids who bully do so because they want to look cool.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

4. Bullied kids have less money than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

5. Bullied kids are overweight.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

6. Bullied kids are shyer than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

7. Kids who bully do so to feel better about themselves.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

8. Bullied kids are always hanging around the teacher.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

9. Bullied kids are a different religion than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

10. The bully and the bullied child don't like each other.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

11. Bullied kids get better grades than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
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This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

12. Bullied kids are weak.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

13. Bullied kids have friends that can't stand up for them.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

14. Bullied kids have less friends than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

15. Bullied kids are not liked by other kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

16. Bullied kids are more popular than other kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

17. Bullied kids hang out by themselves.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

18. Bullied kids are not as athletic as other kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

19. Bullied kids enjoy spending time on schoolwork more than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

20. Bullied kids are better than most kids at sports.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

21. Bullied kids wear weird clothes.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
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This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

22. Bullied kids get mad easily.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

23. Bullied kids are a different race than other kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

24. Bullied kids cry a lot.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

25. Bullied kids are friends with kids that nobody likes.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

26. Bullied kids are quick to fight back when picked on.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

27. Bullied kids are too skinny.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
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This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

28. Kids who bully do so because they are jealous of the bullied child.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

29. Bullied kids can't afford to buy things that most kids can buy.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

30. Bullied kids care a lot about earning good grades.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

31. Bullied kids always tell the teacher when other kids misbehave.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

32. Bullied kids are sad most of the time.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

33. Bullied kids have a bad temper.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

34. Bullied kids always give in to the bully.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

35. Bullied kids have more money than most kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

36. Bullied kids always seem nervous.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

37. Kids who bully are trying to get other kids to not like the bullied child.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

38. Kids who bully just like being mean to other kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

39. Kids who bully are mean to others because they feel bad about themselves.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

40. Bullied kids are friends with kids who also get bullied.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

41. The bully and the bullied child are enemies.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

42. The bully and the bullied child are usually trying to hurt each other.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
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This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
-----	----	-------------

43. Bullied kids would rather talk to the teacher than talk to other kids.

Not true at all	Mostly not true	Neither true or untrue	Mostly true	Always true
-----------------	-----------------	------------------------	-------------	-------------

This could be a reason why I was bullied:

YES	NO	NOT BULLIED
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WDS

Instructions: Below is a list of items that describe kids. For each item that describes you now or within the past 6 months, please circle the response that best describes you. **All responses are voluntary.**

1. There is very little that I enjoy.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
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2. I would rather be alone than with others.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
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3. I refuse to talk.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
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4. I am secretive or keep things to myself.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
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5. I am too shy or timid.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
-----------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------------	-------------

6. I don't have much energy.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
-----------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------------	-------------

7. I am unhappy, sad, or depressed.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
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8. I keep from getting involved with others.

Not true at all	Hardly ever true	Sometimes true	True most of the time	Always true
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IBS

For each of the following questions, choose how many times you did this activity or how many times these things happened to you in the **LAST 30 DAYS**:

1. I upset other students for the fun of it.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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2. In a group I teased other students.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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3. I fought students I could easily beat.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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4. Other students picked on me.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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5. Other students made fun of me.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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6. Other students called me names.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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7. I got hit and pushed by other students.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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8. Other students spread lies or rumors about me.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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9. Other students intentionally excluded me from activities or friendships.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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10. Other students spread lies about me or made fun of me over the internet (e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or other).

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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11. Other students tried to pick a fight with me (or threatened to fight me).

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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12. I helped harass other students.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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13. I teased other students.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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14. I got in a physical fight.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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15. I threatened to hurt or hit another student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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16. I got into a physical fight because I was angry.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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17. I hit back when someone hit me first.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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18. I was mean to someone when I was angry.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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19. I spread rumors about other students.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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20. I started (instigated) arguments or conflicts.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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21. I encouraged people to fight.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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22. I excluded other students from my clique of friends.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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IBS-TV

How often has this student engaged in these behaviors in the last 30 days? All responses are voluntary.

1. Teased or said mean things to a student who is obviously weaker or less popular.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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2. Spread lies or rumors about a student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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3. Purposefully excluded or encouraged others to exclude a student from activities or friendships.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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4. Used the Internet (e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or other) to spread a lie or make fun of a student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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5. Tried to pick a fight with (or threatened to fight) a weaker student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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6. Been physically aggressive or mean to a weaker student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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7. Supported or said something nice to a student who was bullied.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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8. Tried to defend a student who was being bullied.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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9. Encouraged others not to tease or pick on a student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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10. Reported to staff that someone was bullied.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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How often has this happened to this student in the last 30 days?**1. Was called mean names by another student.**

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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2. Was picked on by another student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
-------	--------------	--------------	--------------	-----------------

3. Was made fun of by another student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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4. Lies or rumors were spread about this student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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5. Was purposefully excluded from activities or friendships.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
-------	--------------	--------------	--------------	-----------------

6. Had lies spread about them or was made fun of by a student via the internet (e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or other).

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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7. A classmate (or classmates) tried to pick a fight with this student (or threatened to fight) this student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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8. Was hit or pushed by another student.

Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
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Vita

Sam Manring graduated from Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio with her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology. She attended graduate school at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee to obtain her doctoral degree in clinical psychology. She earned her Master of Arts degree in clinical psychology from UT, and is planning on graduating with her Ph.D. in clinical psychology in December 2019.