

FURTHER EVIDENCE ON THE “COSTS OF PRIVILEGE”: PERFECTIONISM IN HIGH-ACHIEVING YOUTH AT SOCIOECONOMIC EXTREMES

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This study involved two academically-gifted samples of 11th and 12th grade youth at the socioeconomic status (SES) extremes; one from an exclusive private, affluent school, and the other from a magnet school with low-income students. Negative and positive adjustment outcomes were examined in relation to multiple dimensions of perfectionism including perceived parental pressures to be perfect, personal perfectionistic self-presentation, and envy of peers. The low-income students showed some areas of relative vulnerability, but when large group differences were found, it was the affluent youth who were at a disadvantage, with substantially higher substance use and peer envy. Affluent girls seemed particularly vulnerable, with pronounced elevations in perfectionistic tendencies, peer envy, as well as body dissatisfaction. Examination of risk and protective processes showed that relationships with mothers were associated with students' distress as well as positive adjustment. Additionally, findings showed links between (a) envy of peers and multiple outcomes (among high SES girls in particular), (b) dimensions of perfectionism in relation to internalizing symptoms, and (c) high extrinsic versus intrinsic values in relation to externalizing symptoms. © 2014 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

With a focus on two samples of students highly invested in academic excellence, we conducted a study with the central hypothesis that teens from upper-middle-class families would show significantly more disturbance than would their low-income counterparts in several domains, particularly in dimensions of substance use. In the last decade, two studies, both involving 10th graders attending high and low socioeconomic status (SES) public school samples, have shown that affluent students reported significantly more use of all substances—alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, and hard drugs—than did their low-SES counterparts (Luthar & Ansary, 2005; Luthar & D'Avanzo, 1999).

Comparisons in these studies have been labeled as including “SES extremes” (see Luthar & Ansary, 2005) but this was not necessarily true at the high end. The families in these studies did not fall into the “1%” category, which, by current standards, earn more than \$380,000 per year (Gebeloff & Dewan, 2012).

Additionally, the groups compared in these previous studies varied considerably in their respective subcultural emphases on educational goals. In upper-middle-class communities, emphasis on academic excellence is ubiquitous, whereas in low-income communities, the broader peer culture is often diffused with disillusionment regarding school excellence as they believe it will do little for them in the long term (Bowman & Ray, 2012; Burchinal et al., 2011).

In the present study, we addressed both limitations noted previously. First, at the high-SES end, we had a truly extreme group: students attending a private school with annual fees above \$27,000. Second, at the low-SES end, we focused on a cohort of students also strongly committed to

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academics; these youth were attending a select “magnet” school accepting students to the program with a minimum of a “B” average. Both schools were in large cities in the Northeast.

ADJUSTMENT DOMAINS CONSIDERED

In ascertaining specific domains of heightened vulnerability, we considered, first, domains in which affluent youth have previously shown elevations relative to national norms. These included symptoms of both internalizing and externalizing types (for a review, see Luthar, Barkin, & Crossman, 2013), as well as dimensions of substance use (Patrick, Wightman, Schoeni, & Schulenberg, 2012; Schoenborn & Adams, 2010).

Extending past research that has focused only on students’ self-reported distress, we also considered their subjective feelings of well-being. Commonly considered in the positive psychology literature (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Seligman, 2002), dimensions such as personal feelings of competence and well-being are rarely considered in operationalizing “doing well” among youth at risk (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Joseph & Wood, 2010). Accordingly, we examined two positive indices: feelings of personal mastery or competence and of interpersonal relatedness.

VULNERABILITY AND PROTECTIVE MECHANISMS

To discern significant vulnerability and protective processes, we followed guidelines proffered for research on little-studied populations and constructs (cf. Garcia Coll et al., 1996), with (a) our selection of constructs conceptually guided by developmental theory and by extant evidence on the groups under study, and (b) our data analytic plan allowing for some exploratory analyses of salient within-group processes, while incorporating stringency in multivariate analyses.

Resilience research has shown affective quality of relationships to be critical and, in particular, has established that negative parent dimensions (such as acrimony and criticism) in interactions carry more weight than do positive ones (e.g., affection or praise; Luthar, 2006); that is, that “bad is stronger than good” (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenaur, & Vohs, 2001, p. 323). To capture negative indices in the parent–child relationships, we considered two defining facets of maladaptive perfectionism, a construct likely to be elevated among many of these high-achieving youth: perceptions of parent criticism and overly high expectations (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Miller, 1995). We also considered feelings of alienation from both mothers and fathers, and perceptions of depression in each parent (Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

In addition, we examined the quality of close relationships with peers, in part, to ascertain the relative significance of peers versus family. Again, we considered two negative dimensions likely to be potent: frequent negative interactions with close friends (Lee, Hankin, & Mermelstein, 2010; Masten, Telzer, Fuligni, Lieberman, & Eisenberger, 2012) and experiences of sexual harassment by peers (Gruber & Fineran, 2008; Peterson & Hyde, 2009). We also considered lack of support from close friends, as intimacy is inevitably threatened when friends are in competition to distinguish themselves (Russell & Fiske, 2008; Singleton & Vacca, 2007).

In an innovative extension of previous work on high-SES youth, we investigated the significance of several personal attributes that could be particularly significant within the subculture of affluence and the attendant strivings for distinctiveness. The first of these was envy, again, a construct linked with perfectionistic tendencies. As perfectionists seek constant admiration to bolster their self-worth (e.g., see Bartlett, Valdesolo, & DeSteno, 2006) and resist feelings of inferiority (Lo & Abbott, 2013), they are likely to be envious of those who are admired more than they are themselves in their immediate circle. Much has been written about how poor people envy others more well-off and that this engenders maladjustment (Fiske, 2010). This assertion, however, could apply as much or

more to affluent youth, as seen in writings on the “hedonic treadmill”—the more we achieve, the more we want, and we constantly compare ourselves to others rather than seeking an absolute goal (Brickman & Campbell, 1971; Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006). In examining envy of peers here, we considered four different dimensions likely to be significant for teens: Looks, Popularity, Wealth, and Sports (Lavallee & Parker, 2009; Luthar, Siegel, Sin, & Thrastardottir, 2013).

Also a little-studied construct among adolescents and considered here was perfectionistic self-presentation. Uneasiness about weaknesses or inadequacies has been speculated to be significant among typically achievement-oriented affluent groups. Perfectionistic self-presentation in adolescents, in turn, has been related to multiple psychopathological outcomes and this beyond simple trait perfectionism (Hewitt et al., 2011). Associated with low self-esteem, such self-presentation can be implicated in eating disorders and even suicidality. Maladaptive impression management also constrains honest disclosure and, therefore, effective use of psychotherapy (see Hewitt et al., 2011). Accordingly, in this study, we examined students’ reluctance to disclose or talk about imperfections, tendencies to hide them behaviorally, and overall dissatisfaction with bodies (which may be particularly troubling for affluent adolescent girls; see Flett, Panico, & Hewitt, 2011; Patterson, Wang, & Slaney, 2012).

Additionally, we examined a personal value system reflecting a balance between intrinsic goals, such as those of self-acceptance and affiliation, versus extrinsic ones, such as image and personal success. Given the subcultural ethos of “do more and get ahead,” affluent teens may be prone to overemphasizing extrinsic goals (Luthar, Barkin et al., 2013), which, in turn, could presage maladjustment (Kasser, 2002). Plausibly, the same could apply for the subset of low-income youth who are strongly committed to academics, as were youth in the school studied here.

In terms of specific associations hypothesized, we believed that affective dimensions of relationships with both parents and peers would be linked particularly with internalizing symptoms and to feelings of mastery (Hughes & Gullone, 2010; Marmorstein et al., 2010). In addition, we expected that personal attributes of envy, concern about imperfections, and intrinsic/extrinsic goals would show significant associations across the outcome domains examined.

METHODS

Sample

Students were from two large cities in the Northeast: 11th graders from a low-SES community at a select “magnet” high school and 11th and 12th graders from a high-SES private school (Luthar & Barkin, 2012). Respectively, the demographic characteristics in the two schools were as follows: participation rates, 89% ($n = 158$) versus 86% ($n = 141$); females, 63% versus 50%; and students from single-parent homes, 42% versus 18%. Ethnicities were 19.6% versus 75.9% White, 27.8% versus 3.5% Black, 32.3% versus 4.3% Hispanic, 9.5% versus 7.1% Asian, and 10.8% versus 9.2% Other. In the low-SES school, 20% of the mothers and 13% of the fathers had a college degree; 8% of the mothers and 6% of the fathers had a graduate degree. Respective rates in the high-SES school were 30%, 25%, 62%, and 66%.

Procedure

The low-SES sample was assessed during the fall of the students’ junior year in 2005, whereas the high-SES sample was assessed during the spring of their junior or senior years in 2006. Students’ participation in this study was based on passive consent procedures, with data collected as part of school-based initiatives on positive youth development. All measures were administered in groups; no student incentives were provided per the administrators’ requests in both schools.

Measures

All instruments have been used in past research on diverse adolescent samples, including those in affluence (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Yates, Tracy, & Luthar, 2008), with strong reliability and validity. Alpha coefficients for reliability and validity, respectively, are provided in parentheses as average values for girls and boys across both schools in the following sections.

Internalizing and Externalizing Domains. The Youth Self Report measure (YSR) contains 112 items encompassing Internalizing (α s: .78, .79) and Externalizing (α s: .67, .71) domains (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

Substance Use. We used the Monitoring the Future study survey (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 1984). As in previous studies (cf. Luthar & Barkin, 2012), we created a composite substance use variable by adding scores for cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs during the past year (α s .78, .65).

Mastery and Relatedness. The Realistic Self-Awareness measure from the Resiliency Scales for Children & Adolescents (Prince-Embury, 2005) includes 5-point subscales for Sense of Mastery (20 items), for example, "I can make good things happen" (α s .92, .90), and Sense of Relatedness (24 items), for example, "There are people who love and care about me" (α s: .93, .92).

Alienation from Parents. The Alienation subscale of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) consists of 50 items (25 each for mothers/fathers, α s .85/.79, .75/.77) rated on a 5-point scale, such as, "I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my mother/father."

Parent Criticism and Expectations. The Parent Criticism (four items) and Expectations (five items) subscales of the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990) include items such as "I am punished for doing things less than perfectly" (α s: .82, .82), and "My parents set very high standards for me" (α s .76, .79), respectively.

Parent Depression. The Depression section of the Family History Screen (Weissman, Wickramaratne, Adams, Wolk, Verdelli, & Olfson, 2000) was used to measure teens' perceptions of depressive symptoms in both mothers/fathers (α s: .74/.73, .66/.77).

Social Interactions. The Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) contains 29 items measuring negative interactions (e.g., "How much do you and your close friend argue with each other?"; α s: .88, .88), and close friend support ("How much do you share secrets and private feelings with your close friend?"; α s: .91, .85).

Sexual Harassment. The Experience of Sexual Harassment from Fineran & Bennett (1999) evaluates students' perceived experiences of sexual harassment committed by peers, for example, a peer "touched, brushed up against me, or cornered me in a sexual way" (α s: .73, .77).

Envy. Students reported on four types of envy felt toward their peers: Looks (α s: .90/.89), Sports (α s: .90/.89), Popularity (α s: .87/.88), and Wealth (α s: .74/.68; Luthar, Siegel et al., 2013).

Perfectionism. The Perfectionistic Self-Presentation scale (Hewitt et al., 2003) contains subscales of Nondisplay of Imperfection (e.g., "I judge myself based on the mistakes I make in front of other people"; α s: .87/.83) and Nondisclosure of Imperfection (e.g., "Admitting failure to others is the worst possible thing"; α s: .79/.68).

Body Dissatisfaction. The Body Dissatisfaction subscale of The Eating Disorder Inventory (Garner, Olmstead, & Polivy, 1983) consists of 23 items rated on a 5-point scale, (e.g., “I feel satisfied with the shape of my body”; α s: .89/.82).

Goal Orientation. The Aspiration Index (AI-R, Kasser & Ryan, 1996) measures Intrinsic and Extrinsic goals subscales. As in multiple studies (Duriez, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2007; Sheldon & Kasser, 2008; Vansteenkiste, Duriez, Simons, & Soenens, 2006), we created a composite variable subtracting the intrinsic goals score from the extrinsic score (α s: .73/.75).

RESULTS

Data Analytic Approach

In comparing our two samples, a significant consideration at the outset was to guard against both type II and type I errors. As this is the first known study comparing adjustment among academically talented high- and low-income teens, it was considered optimal to conduct in-depth exploration of different domains (rather than reducing data via factor analyses, e.g., combining measures could obscure important differences existing in reality; see Sheldon & Hoon, 2007). At the same time, to reduce type I errors, two safeguards were adopted. First, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were conducted on conceptually related subscales (e.g., affective relationship and personal attribute dimensions). Second, results were discussed and interpreted only if—beyond statistical significance—effect sizes were in the medium to large range (η^2 of .03, .10, and .30 reflect small, medium, and large effect sizes respectively; Judd, Kenny, & McClelland, 2001).

Descriptive Data

Means and standard deviations for outcome variables and for all predictor variables are shown in Table 1; values in each case were compared via two-way (School \times Gender) multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs). For adjustment outcomes, results showed significant differences by School (Wilks $\lambda = .59$, $p < .0001$, partial $\eta^2 = .41$), and Gender ($\lambda = .82$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .18$); the interaction effect was not significant. Follow-up univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) showed that high-SES students had significantly higher substance use with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .20$), but lower externalizing symptoms ($\eta^2 = .04$). With regard to gender differences, girls reported higher internalizing symptoms and also higher relatedness.

Analyses of all affective relationship dimensions showed significant effects for School ($\lambda = .87$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .13$) and Gender ($\lambda = .81$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .19$), but not for the interaction. ANOVAs revealed that the low-SES students reported higher parental criticism and expectations, higher depression in mothers and fathers, and more peer sexual harassment. In contrast, the high-SES adolescents reported higher alienation from both mothers and fathers.

Finally, comparisons of personal attributes showed significant main effects for School ($\lambda = .67$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .33$), and Gender ($\lambda = .77$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .23$), and also for the interaction term ($\lambda = .94$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$). Follow-up ANOVAs showed higher envy among high-SES teens. At the same time, high-SES adolescents also had greater disparity between extrinsic and intrinsic goals. School \times Gender interactions were significant for Envy Looks, $F(1, 279) = 4.04$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$; Envy Wealth, $F(1, 279) = 4.09$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$; and Body Dissatisfaction, $F(1, 282) = 12.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. In all cases, girls had higher scores than boys, with the disparity greater in the high- than in the low-SES school.

Given the substantial differences in ethnicity in the two schools, we re-ran all MANOVAs (Table 1), with minority ethnicity considered as a covariate. Results were unchanged from those previously reported.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Outcomes and Predictors: Affective Dimensions (Peers and Parents) and Personal Attributes

Outcomes	Low SES		High SES		F _{Gender}	η^2_{Gender}	F _{School}	η^2_{School}
	Girls Mean (SD)	Boys Mean (SD)	Girls Mean (SD)	Boys Mean (SD)				
Substance Use	2.74 (0.63)	4.63 (0.83)	11.14 (0.78)	9.90 (0.80)	0.19	0.00	68.33***	0.20
Internalizing	15.55 (0.92)	11.19 (1.20)	15.94 (1.15)	9.22 (1.18)	26.23***	0.09	0.42	0.00
Externalizing	13.92 (0.75)	15.73 (0.98)	12.03 (0.92)	11.00 (0.96)	0.180	0.00	11.38***	0.04
Mastery	54.65 (1.03)	52.96 (1.35)	53.40 (1.27)	56.68 (1.38)	0.416	0.00	0.81	0.00
Relatedness	72.00 (1.26)	66.61 (1.65)	73.07 (1.58)	71.80 (1.67)	4.94*	0.02	3.49	0.01
Peer Dimensions								
Negative Interactions	1.76 (0.07)	1.94 (0.10)	1.53 (0.09)	1.71 (0.09)	4.45*	0.02	5.48*	0.02
Social Support	3.90 (0.07)	3.27 (0.09)	3.76 (0.08)	3.38 (0.08)	43.05***	0.13	0.02	0.00
Sexual Harassment	17.35 (0.48)	17.98 (0.63)	16.58 (0.62)	16.62 (0.64)	0.33	0.00	2.76	0.01
Parent Dimensions								
Parent Criticism	9.21 (0.39)	9.80 (0.52)	8.36 (0.48)	7.87 (0.50)	0.01	0.00	7.24**	0.03
Parent Expectations	17.04 (0.47)	16.62 (0.62)	15.15 (0.57)	14.80 (0.60)	0.50	0.00	9.08**	0.03
Mother-Depression	2.92 (0.23)	2.72 (0.31)	2.88 (0.27)	1.74 (0.28)	6.40*	0.02	2.95	0.01
Father-Depression	2.81 (0.23)	2.75 (0.31)	2.04 (0.27)	1.98 (0.28)	0.06	0.00	6.51*	0.02
Personal Attributes								
Envy Looks	0.59 (0.06)	0.50 (0.08)	1.10 (0.07)	0.73 (0.08)	10.35**	0.04	22.41***	0.07
Envy Sports	0.41 (0.06)	0.47 (0.08)	0.67 (0.07)	0.66 (0.08)	0.11	0.00	9.03**	0.03
Envy Popularity	0.55 (0.06)	0.49 (0.08)	1.09 (0.07)	0.82 (0.07)	6.20*	0.02	34.09***	0.11
Envy Wealth	0.44 (0.04)	0.45 (0.06)	0.50 (0.05)	0.30 (0.06)	3.43	0.01	0.79	0.00
Nondisclosure Perfectionism	22.54 (0.74)	22.72 (0.97)	22.00 (0.92)	21.63 (0.95)	0.01	0.00	0.70	0.00
Nondisplay Perfectionism	39.66 (1.16)	39.27 (1.52)	40.01 (1.46)	38.82 (1.51)	0.34	0.00	0.00	0.00
Body Dissatisfaction	7.22 (0.62)	5.99 (0.83)	10.47 (0.76)	4.00 (0.79)	27.85***	0.09	0.59	0.00
Extrinsic—Intrinsic	-9.30 (0.62)	-6.08 (0.83)	-11.79 (0.75)	-7.98 (0.79)	23.29***	0.08	7.26**	0.03

Note. η^2 .03 = small effect size, .10 = medium effect size, .20 = large effect size.

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

Simple Correlations: Affective Relationship Dimensions and Personal Attributes

In Tables 2 and 3, we present simple correlations between the two sets of predictor variables (associations between each set and the outcome variables are examined in the more stringent multivariate regressions described later). Particularly striking were the strong correlations between perceived parent criticism and expectations (central socializing components of maladaptive perfectionism; both also significantly linked with Mother- and Father-alienation), and adolescents' self-described (a) predilections for Nondisplay and Nondisclosure of their imperfections, and (b) Body Dissatisfaction, as well as Envy of peers' looks. These patterns were more consistently seen among high-SES girls and boys than their low-SES counterparts.

Maladjustment Relative to National Norms

Figure 1 displays the proportion of youth, by gender and school, reporting clinically significant symptoms on the YSR ("above average," at the 65th percentile: 7% in norms). Girls and boys in both settings showed elevations compared with norms. With regard to substance use, high-SES students showed much higher use across all indices compared with national norms (as previously established; Luthar & Barkin, 2012). By contrast, the low-SES students generally approached or were lower than national norms, with the exception of somewhat elevated rates for alcohol use (Figure 2).

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses: Effects of Relationships

As peers are widely considered to be more salient than parents in late-adolescents' everyday life interactions, we afforded them priority in regression equations (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), placing peer support, negative interactions, and sexual harassment in Block 1. In Block 2, we included dimensions of family relationships (see Table 4) to ascertain the unique strength of associations after having considered problems in peer relationships.

Notably, the role of peers was not nearly as powerful, given beta weight values, as was the role of parents (see Table 4). Sexual harassment was related to externalizing symptoms for boys in both schools. Lack of peer intimacy or support was linked to low relatedness and mastery for high-SES girls and to high internalizing symptoms among affluent boys in particular.

As shown in Table 4, high parent expectations were related to the high-SES boys' internalizing and externalizing symptoms, whereas parent criticism showed unique links only for low-SES girls (in relation to mastery and, modestly, to relatedness). By contrast, findings showed several associations for Mother-alienation and/or perceived Mother-depression, with one or both of these maternal variables related to self-reported symptoms among girls and boys in both schools, as well as to poor relatedness (in all groups but the high-SES boys). Among the father variables, high-SES girls' internalizing symptoms were related to both perceived depression among fathers and alienation from them.

Multiple Regression Analyses: The Role of Personal Attributes

Envy for looks and low Intrinsic versus Extrinsic values were linked with externalizing symptoms among all groups except low-SES boys (where the overall model was not significant; see Table 5). In all groups, one of the two dimensions of perfectionism—nondisclosure and nondisplay of imperfections—was associated with high internalizing symptoms. Significant effects for body dissatisfaction were seen with internalizing symptoms and with mastery among high-SES girls, with the highest beta weights of all personal attributes in both instances.

Table 2
Simple Correlations Between Affective Predictors and Personal Attributes: High-SES Girls and Boys

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Peer Negative Interaction	-.23 [†]	-.06	.72***	-.02	.12	.03	.24*	.21 [†]	.06	.20	.15	-.15	.21 [†]	.20	-.11	.29*	.13
2. Peer Support	.32*	-.22	.10	-.05	.06	-.07	.03	-.12	.10	-.09	-.07	-.03	-.28*	-.11	-.07	-.08	-.10
3. Harassment	.05	-.25*	.21	.24 [†]	.38**	.26*	.27*	.23 [†]	.19*	.35***	.11	-.16	.19	.31*	.36**	.27*	.24 [†]
4. P-Criticism	.01	-.15	.21	.72***	.70***	.65***	.44***	.52***	.19	.31**	.02	-.05	.12	.20	.20	.22 [†]	.38**
5. P-Expectations	.50***	-.43***	.28*	.33**	.50***	.46***	.29*	.37**	.24 [†]	.28*	.01	-.02	.10	.29*	.41***	.29*	.23 [†]
6. M-Alienation	.20	-.27*	.23 [†]	.51**	.31*	.67***	.44***	.45***	.16	.25*	.00	-.08	.19	.24*	.27*	.29*	.31**
7. F-Alienation	.17	.11	.02	-.11	-.02	.19	.21 [†]	.44***	.51***	.40***	.24 [†]	-.04	.13	.25*	.13	.22 [†]	.41***
8. M-Depression	.17	.06	.07	.35**	.20	.15	.47***	.41**	.09	.27*	.28*	.08	.12	.14	-.03	.14	.46***
9. F-Depression	.23 [†]	-.14	.29*	.37**	.19	.30*	.10	.15	.09	.30*	.65***	.39**	.46***	.52***	.07	-.05	.18
10. Envy-Looks	.12	-.03	.20	.21	.15	.22 [†]	.09	.02	-.01	.62***	.28*	.34**	.45***	.47***	.17	.18	.54***
11. Envy-Pop	.24 [†]	-.13	.14	.25 [†]	-.04	.20	.06	-.11	-.02	.57***	.50***	.34**	.30*	.19	.03	-.18	.18
12. Envy-Sports	.23 [†]	-.20	.35**	.32**	.19	.54***	.38**	.06	.05	.50***	.43***	.43***	.30*	.66***	.00	.13	.19
13. Envy-Wealth	.29*	-.08	.07	.36**	.20	.40**	.22	-.07	.08	.50***	.47***	.32**	.42**	.42**	.19	.35**	.26*
14. Extrinsic-Intrinsic	.08	-.20	.05	.53***	.30*	.35**	.33**	.02	.23 [†]	.46***	.46***	.31*	.43***	.47***	.54***	.18	.18
15. Nondisclosure	.50***	-.43***	.28*	.33**	.50***	.23 [†]	.21	-.02	.24 [†]	.46***	.46***	.28*	.29*	.37**	.69***	.16	.16
16. Nondisplay	.20	-.27*	.23 [†]	.51**	.31*	.04	.06	.11	-.03	.35**	.21 [†]	.09	.24 [†]	.10	.17	.32*	.32*
17. Body Dissatisfaction																	

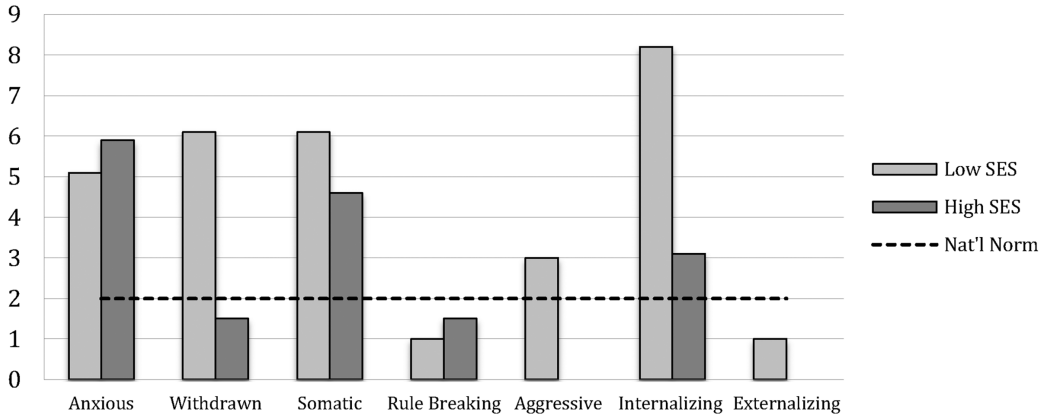
Note. P = parent; M = mother; F = father. Values for girls are in the top right of the diagonal and for boys, in the bottom left.
p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001. † *p* < .10.

Table 3
Simple Correlations Between Affective Predictors and Personal Attributes: Low-SES Girls and Boy

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Peer Negative Interaction																	
2. Peer Support	-.07																
3. Harassment	.31*	.18															
4. P-Criticism	-.00	.02	.31*														
5. P-Expectations	.18	.12	.37**	.64***													
6. M-Alienation	.28*	-.13	.19	.33*	.21												
7. F-Alienation	.26†	.01	.38**	.29*	.17	.44**											
8. M-Depression	.35*	-.27†	.18	.05	-.05	.28*	.35*										
9. F-Depression	.32*	-.26†	.30*	.10	.07	.33*	.40**	.87***									
10. Envy-Looks	.37**	.05	.31*	.16	.17	.25†	.38**	.34*	.38**								
11. Envy-Pop	.19	.09	.23†	.03	.18	.16	.40**	.22	.28*	.77***							
12. Envy-Sports	.13	-.00	.01	.18	.22	-.07	.09	.10	.06	.42***	.31*						
13. Envy-Wealth	.10	-.17	.23†	.19	.24†	.01	.30*	.31*	.39**	.65***	.55***	.31*					
14. Extrinsic-Intrinsic	.12	-.37**	.19	.05	.14	-.02	.05	.18	.27†	.25†	.26*	.04	.22				
15. Nondictlosure	.16	-.14	.23†	.26†	.24†	.31*	.42**	.21	.31*	.26*	.18	.07	.15	.33*			
16. Nondisplay	.14	.03	.25†	.40**	.38**	.29*	.45***	.26†	.31*	.44***	.38**	.18	.32*	.18	.50***		
17. Body Dissatisfaction	.09	-.10	.18	.24†	.23†	.37**	.34*	.14	.18	.13	.25	-.15	.11	.29*	.13	.07	

Note. P = parent; M = mother; F = father. Values for girls are in the top right of the diagonal and for boys, in the bottom left.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. † $p < .10$.

Girls' YSR Scores- Percent "Much Above Average"



Boys' YSR Scores- Percent "Much Above Average"

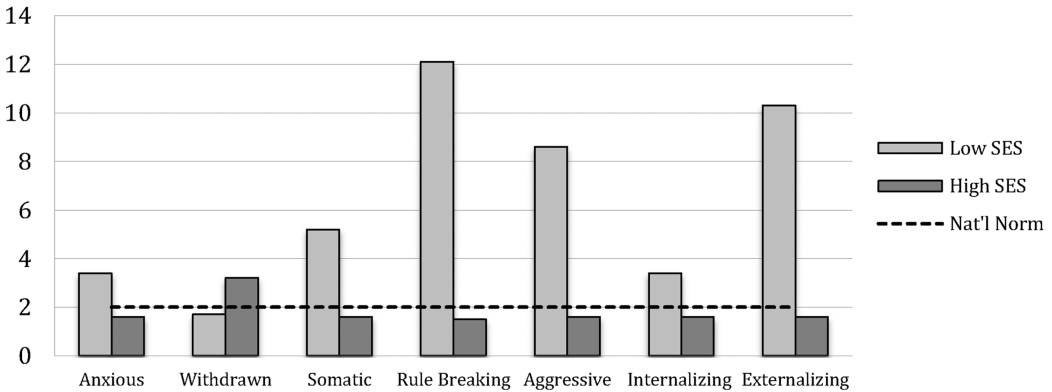


FIGURE 1. Incidence of clinically significant self-reported symptoms among students compared with national norms. Note that similar results were found for "Much Above Average."

DISCUSSION

Group comparisons in this study showed relatively high self-reported distress among the inner-city group, a finding that is unsurprising, given their multiple sociodemographic adversities. These students were from low-income families and were mostly ethnic minorities, and many had single mothers. They were in a small magnet program, ensconced within a very large inner-city public school, displaying high academic motivation despite low family financial resources and educational aspirations that did not fit well with the larger peer culture (Berzin, 2010). It is understandable, therefore, that they reported high subjective distress in some areas, relative to their affluent counterparts (see McLoyd et al., 2009; Taylor, 2011).

At the same time, there were many areas in which these stereotypically "at-risk" students did *not* fare more poorly than the affluent group; in fact, the latter were at a distinct disadvantage. Most striking were two domains: substance use and envy. Direct comparisons in the present study extend

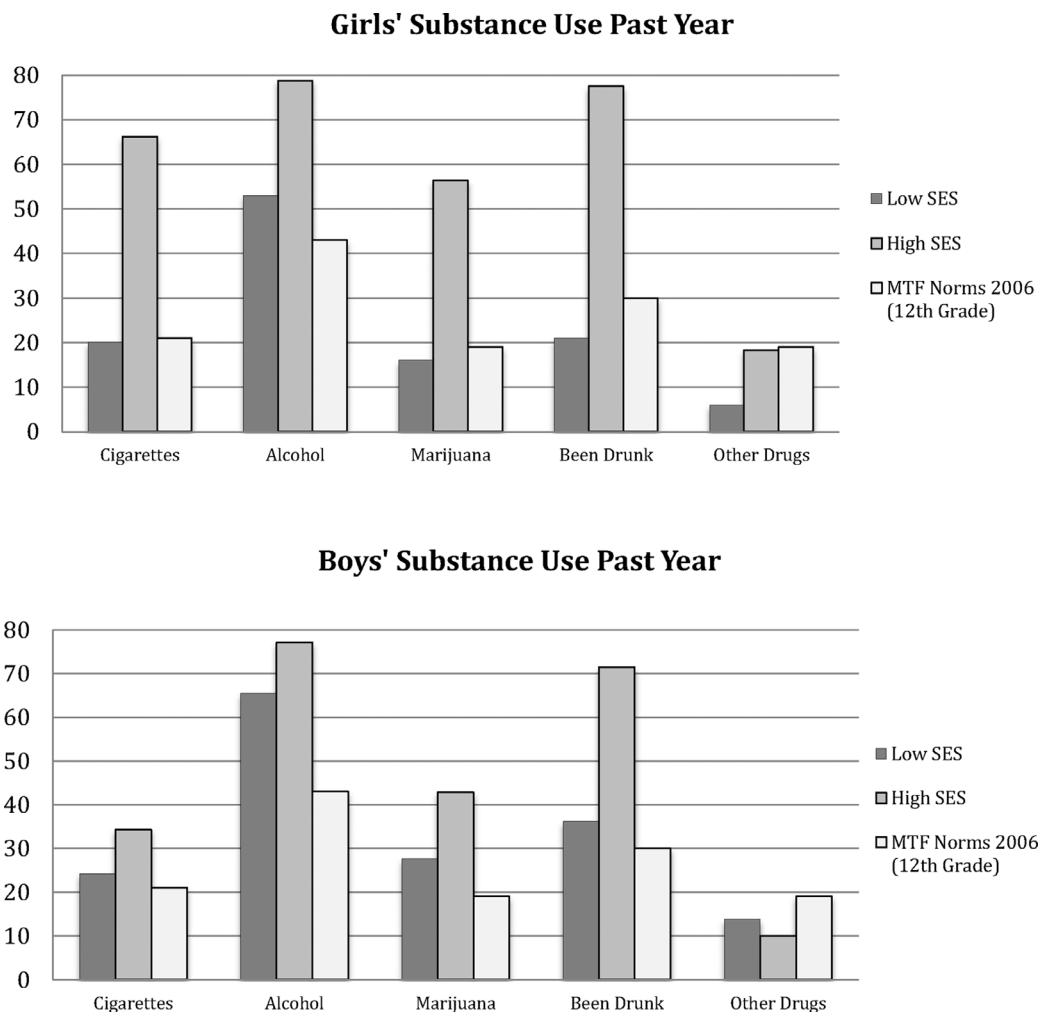


FIGURE 2. The percentage of students reporting abuse in the past year compared with Monitoring the Future (MTF) national norms (2006). National norms data are not available for girls and boys separately.

early high school substance use findings from Luthar and D'Avanzo (1999), as our two samples were each strongly committed to academic achievement. Despite the shared stressors of maintaining high grades and the impending college applications and admissions, the inner-city students were much lower than were the affluent sample on all dimensions of substance use. Collectively, these findings resonate with reports that abuse of illegal substances is becoming more of a problem of the suburbs, than of the inner city (see Connell, Gilreath, Aklin, & Brex, 2010; Schiffman, 2011).

Envy was the second dimension on which the affluent group was at a distinct disadvantage. Again, stereotypes dictate that it is people in poverty who tend to be highly envious of those who have more (Fiske, 2010). Our findings establish the opposite—the private school students were consistently higher on envy of peers across all dimensions.

Table 4
Peer and Family Affective Relationship Variables in Relation to Central Outcomes^a

Predictors	Internalizing				Externalizing			
	High SES		Low SES		High SES		Low SES	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Negative Interaction	-0.11	0.21 [†]	-0.10	-0.20	0.11	0.20	0.12	-0.23 [†]
Social Support	-0.07	-0.31**	0.09	0.02	0.03	0.21 [†]	0.03	0.09
Harassment	0.12	0.18 [†]	0.07	-0.13	0.18	0.32**	0.21 [†]	0.34*
Peers: R²	0.11	0.33***	0.08[†]	0.01	0.15*	0.27***	0.17**	0.23**
Criticism	0.06	0.18	0.21	-0.33 [†]	0.16	-0.10	-0.05	-0.01
Expectations	0.20	0.36*	-0.08	0.35 [†]	0.03	0.31*	0.11	0.03
M-Alienation	-0.07	-0.01	0.39**	0.35*	0.23	-0.08	0.25 [†]	0.32*
F-Alienation	0.37*	0.03	-0.03	0.19*	0.49*	0.29	0.11	0.11
M-Depression	-0.03	0.28*	0.18	0.71	-0.34*	0.24 [†]	0.03	0.15
F-Depression	0.31*	-0.04	0.13	-0.38	-0.11	0.12	0.06	0.18
Family: R²	0.43**	0.63***	0.45***	0.36*	0.53***	0.53***	0.30***	0.49***
R² Fam: Peers	3.91	1.91	5.63	36.0	3.53	1.96	1.76	2.13
			Mastery				Relatedness	
Negative Interaction	-0.06	-0.32*	0.00	0.27 [†]	0.29**	-0.21 [†]	0.16	0.41**
Social Support	0.40**	0.21	0.01	0.24 [†]	0.55***	0.53***	0.33***	0.36**
Harassment	0.12	-0.16	0.11	0.13	-0.18	0.01	-0.03	0.08
Peers: R²	0.18*	0.31***	0.02	0.13[†]	0.39***	0.53***	0.15**	0.19*
Criticism	-0.17	-0.23	-0.37*	-0.13	0.14	-0.16	-0.28 [†]	0.17
Expectations	0.05	0.12	0.27 [†]	-0.23	-0.32*	-0.15	0.28*	-0.25
M-Alienation	-0.41*	-0.16	-0.36*	-0.28 [†]	-0.29 [†]	-0.12	-0.33*	-0.34*
F-Alienation	0.23	0.15	0.07	0.05	0.00	-0.02	0.07	-0.07
M-Depression	-0.16	-0.05	-0.14	-0.65*	-0.13	0.00	-0.50**	-0.10
F-Depression	-0.05	0.08	-0.04	0.29	0.05	-0.01	0.24	-0.12
Family: R²	0.40**	0.34*	0.31***	0.47**	0.59***	0.64***	0.42***	0.39**
R² Fam: Peers	2.22	1.10	15.5	3.62	1.51	1.21	2.80	2.05

Note. M = mother; F = father; Fam = family. Values in italics appear to be suppressor effects and are not interpreted.
^aBeta weights are not shown for Substance Use, as equations, overall, were not statistically significant (all groups).
 p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001. [†]*p* < .10.

Why might this be? In general, studies have shown that people tend to be more envious of what those close to them (friends and neighbors) have and not what relative strangers on television possess (Fiske, 2010; Ninivaggi, 2010). We suspect that for affluent students in an exclusive private school, the race is very tight to get ahead of others on the “status scale” relative to their peers: One point on the scale that someone else earns implies that one’s own relative status is set back by one coveted point. Further, both substance use and feelings of envy could be ways of expressing the frustration of always falling short of perfection.

In group comparisons on affective dimensions, results showed some disadvantages for the affluent youth: Feelings of alienation from both mothers and fathers were higher. Although the effect sizes were small, the findings on alienation are striking, again countering stereotypes that well-to-do families are necessarily happy or that poverty inevitable implies poor parent–child relationships.

Table 5
Personal Attributes in Relation to Central Outcomes^a

	Internalizing				Externalizing			
	High SES		Low SES		High SES		Low SES	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Envy Looks	0.13	0.27	0.30 [†]	0.43*	0.34*	0.46*	0.36*	–
Envy Popularity	0.02	–0.27	–0.06	–0.07	–0.23	0.07	–0.25	–
Envy Sports	–0.12	–0.11	0.00	–0.23 [†]	–0.32**	–0.25	0.01	–
Envy Wealth	–0.16	0.23	–0.16	–0.06	0.05	–0.05	–0.20	–
Extrinsic–Intrinsic	0.16	–0.09	0.00	–0.24 [†]	0.44**	0.34*	0.37***	–
Nondisclosure of Imperf.	0.26*	–0.01	0.18	0.11	–0.04	–0.18	0.05	–
	Mastery				Relatedness			
Envy Looks	0.30	–	–0.19	–0.01	–0.11	0.20	–0.26	0.15
Envy Popularity	–0.33*	–	–0.07	0.37 [†]	–0.03	0.29	0.11	0.30
Envy Sports	–0.07	–	0.08	–0.04	0.17	–0.01	0.17	–0.01
Envy Wealth	–0.20	–	0.12	–0.38*	–0.34*	–0.17	0.09	–0.23
Extrinsic–Intrinsic	0.12	–	–0.24*	–0.05	0.04	–0.31 [†]	–0.28**	–0.20
Nondisclosure of Imperf.	–0.11	–	–0.15	0.01	–0.44**	–0.21	–0.31**	–0.10
Nondisplay of Imperf.	–0.26 [†]	–	–0.03	–0.31 [†]	0.05	–0.32 [†]	0.04	–0.20
Body Dissatisfaction	–0.38**	–	–0.05	–0.33*	–0.17	–0.21	–0.16	–0.32*
Total R²	0.32**	–	0.16*	0.32*	0.39***	0.39**	0.28***	0.28*

Note. Values in italics appear to be due to suppressor effects, as beta weights are opposite in valence to those in parallel zero-order correlations; hence, they are not interpreted.

^aBeta weights are not shown for outcome domains when the overall R² for the equation was statistically not significant.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. [†] $p < .10$.

Relative Salience of Predictors: Affective Relationships

Overall, our findings lend little support to claims that during adolescence, the peer group is much more influential than are parents (Harris, 1998). Despite giving peer dimensions priority in our regression equations, on average, the set of parent dimensions—subsuming criticism and expectations, alienation from each parent and perceived depression in each—generally accounted for at least twice as much variation in teens' self-reported internalizing and externalizing symptoms. Similar patterns were generally seen in predicting to adolescents' feelings of mastery and relatedness.

Among the findings on peers, perhaps most noteworthy was the high variance explained in symptoms (almost one third) for high-SES boys, in particular. It is plausible that for these boys—each jockeying for position in a group of highly talented, ambitious “alpha males”—having close, safe relationships with age mates could be particularly comforting.

With regard to parent gender, our findings support prior evidence on mother–adolescent relationships (cf. Luthar & Barkin, 2012), with one of the two negative maternal indices (alienation and depression) showing multiple links with symptoms as well as positive adjustment indicators. At the same time, alienation from fathers had unique links with both internalizing and externalizing symptoms among high-SES girls, supporting suggestions that relationships with their extremely high-achieving, high-status fathers can have significant ramifications for the adjustment of girls in hyper-competitive, upwardly mobile community settings (see Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

Although perceived parent criticism and expectations attained few significant associations in the multivariate regressions, this is likely due to the high shared overlap with other parent indices, notably, parent alienation. To illustrate, girls' scores on criticism shared as much as 36% of variance with scores on alienation from mothers, as indicated by simple correlations (of .65 and .60 among high- and low-SES girls, respectively). Indeed, prior research has suggested that the ill effects of parent criticism and high expectations are mediated by youths' feelings of anger and alienation from their parents (Yates et al., 2008).

Personal Attributes

Two correlates of externalizing symptoms for all groups (except low-SES boys, for whom the overall model was nonsignificant) were envy of looks and more extrinsic-oriented values. With regard to the former, it is well documented that appearance is important to teenagers. Physical attractiveness is related not only to self-esteem (Morin, Maiano, Marsh, Janosz, & Nagengast, 2010) but also peer acceptance (Vannatta, Gartstein, Zeller, & Noll, 2009). As Fiske (2010) has demonstrated, envy can cause deep feelings of not only shame and humiliation, but also the externalizing symptom of anger.

These speculations are supported by the links between relatively high extrinsic aspirations (relative to intrinsic ones) and externalizing symptoms. Intrinsic goals, such as cultivating personal growth and helping others in need, are arguably more under one's personal control than are extrinsic goals, such as being famous, rich, or admired by many. Individuals who disproportionately aspire for extrinsic goals tend to show not only higher depression and anxiety, but also more narcissism and Machiavellianism (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Kasser, 2002). Furthermore, it has been shown that the actual attainment of extrinsic goals is associated with increases in ill-being rather than well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

Resonant with these arguments are our findings that nondisplay and nondisclosure of perfection were linked, across all groups, with a greater difference between extrinsic and intrinsic goals. Thus, teenagers with more externally oriented motives not only are likely to lack satisfaction from achieving such goals (Deci & Ryan, 2012), but in addition, are likely to strive still more fiercely to present themselves as perfect.

Both indices of personal perfectionism—nondisplay and nondisclosure of imperfection—were also associated with more reported internalizing symptoms and showed some links with relatedness. To some degree, this may reflect bi-directional links. Difficulty sharing their insecurities could contribute to teens' feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression, and those with high distress may be reluctant to disclose this to others for fear of judgment or ridicule.

Tendencies toward perfectionistic self-presentation were also linked to envy for all groups, with the exception of high-SES girls. This overall pattern suggests that envy may often lurk beneath a perfectionistic facade among teens, as well as the reverse—the propensity to be envious contributes to a deeply held desire to be perceived as perfect.

Gender-Specific Findings: Vulnerability of High-SES Girls

Viewed collectively, our findings in this study are especially troubling with regard to affluent girls. Prior research has suggested that they have elevated difficulties across multiple domains, and this study, again, confirms and extends this claim (Luthar & Barkin, 2012). Here, we find additional areas of pronounced vulnerability: envy of peers across dimensions and dissatisfaction with their bodies, with the latter being *more than 3 standard deviations* above the values of inner-city girls and affluent boys.

Also troubling were the potential ramifications of these personal attributes—envy, extrinsic goals, and perfectionism—for psychological adjustment. Among affluent girls, these factors collectively had high overlap with internalizing and externalizing symptoms (48% and 49%, respectively), with the variance explained, in the latter, being almost twice as high in this group versus others (28% or less). Furthermore, body dissatisfaction was uniquely linked not only to internalizing problems but also to these girls' sense of personal mastery—and this, despite controlling for nondisplay and nondisclosure of imperfections. Thus, concerns about body image are not just likely to be highly elevated among upper-middle-class adolescent girls (Friedman, Wilfley, Pike, Striegel-Moore, & Rodin, 2012), but, as importantly, these high concerns could adversely affect their personal and psychological adjustment (e.g., Verplanken & Velsvick, 2008).

Limitations, Caveats, and Future Directions for Research and Practice

Limitations of this study include the sole reliance on self-report measures and the cross-sectional design, which precludes any definitive conclusions about the direction of relationships discussed. Additionally, our sample sizes were small—unavoidable, given the highly selective nature of both schools studied—leaving open the possibility of type II errors. We sought to minimize such errors by conducting analyses on groups of conceptually related constructs (rather than considering all together), while guarding against over-interpreting any “chance findings” by restricting our focus on (a) recurrent rather than sporadic associations and (b) those with medium to large effect sizes.

Another limitation is that family “affluence” status is confounded with ethnicity in these samples, as in others, with the wealthy families predominantly from Caucasian backgrounds. To disentangle ethnicity and income in such research, it will be necessary to sample multiple school districts simultaneously to include a sufficient number of ethnic minority affluent youth.

Looking toward future research directions, simple correlations in this study indicate the value of testing a priori hypotheses of models that encompass multilevel dimensions of maladaptive perfectionism, as well as perfectionistic self-presentation. More specifically, it would be useful to examine partial or full mediation effects, with parent criticism and expectations—both core aspects of maladaptive perfectionism (Frost et al., 1990)—considered as exogenous predictor variables. Along with alienation from parents (see also Yates et al., 2008), these would be examined as predictors of youths' personal tendencies toward nondisplay and nondisclosure of imperfections. Reluctance to display or disclose imperfections, in turn, would predict to high symptom levels, low self-efficacy and self-esteem, and low satisfaction with their physical appearance, in particular.

In conclusion, this is the first study, to our knowledge, comparing affluent high school students with youth who, like them, are highly academically motivated but live in poverty. Our findings show that family wealth does not indicate parallel advantages in personal or family functioning; the largest group differences we found were on substance use and dimensions of envy, and on each of these, the affluent sample (particularly girls) fared more poorly. Together, our results point to the need for continued research on the confluence of familial, community, and individual-level factors that are potent “risk-modifiers” within the context of high pressures to achieve. In schools that are predominated by high achievers, educators and parents alike must remain cognizant that strivings for perfectionism can become unhealthy, indeed inimical, to the overall well-being of today's youth.

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