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<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4393-1887>, Hunter, Simon and Rasmussen, Susan (2015) The Role of Primary Appraisals in the Relationship between Peer Victimization and Psychological Wellbeing in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review. In: British Psychological Society Developmental Section and Social Section Annual Conference, 9-11 September 2015, Manchester.

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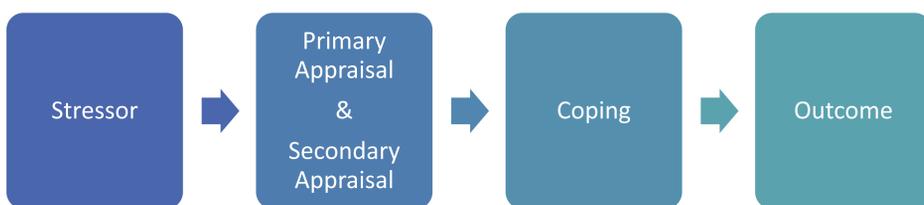
Research at the University of York St John

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Introduction

- Peer victimisation is a common experience in school for many children and young people. It includes physical, verbal, and indirect aggression where the perpetrator intends to cause harm to the victim.
- Research indicates that peer victimisation has both an immediate and long-term relationship with poor psychological wellbeing and adjustment (Wolke & Lereya, 2015; Reijntjes *et al.*, 2011; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009).
- Peer victimisation is clearly a stressful experience for victims, and therefore can be explored using models of stress, such as Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress. As shown in Figure 1, the Transactional Model of Stress proposes that following an interaction an individual goes through a process of appraisal, which involves them evaluating the relevance and importance of an interaction for their own wellbeing.

Figure 1: Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress



Appraisals

- Primary appraisal: An evaluation of the nature of the experience in the context of personal goals
- Secondary appraisal: An evaluation of the coping resources available to the individual.

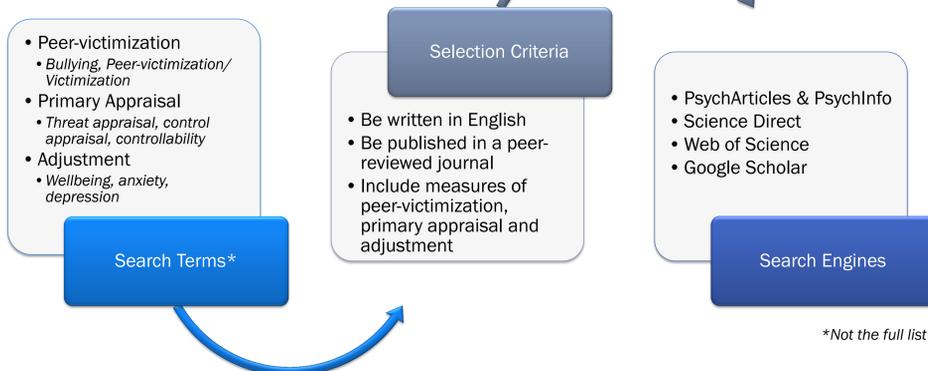
Lazarus (1998) argued that primary appraisals determine the intensity and type of emotional reaction. However, the study of the role of primary appraisals in this relationship has attracted relatively little research attention.

Therefore, the aim of this systematic review is to examine studies that have explored the relationship between peer victimization, primary appraisal and psychological wellbeing in children and adolescents.

Method

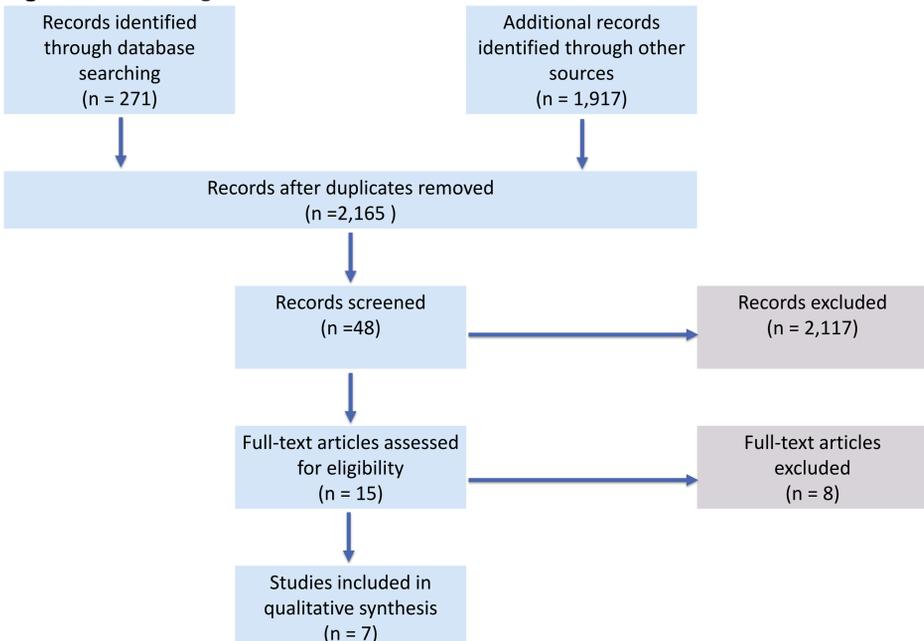
Literature searching for the systematic review took place from March to May 2015. Figure 2 outlines the search terms, selection criteria, and search engines used.

Figure 2: Systematic Review Method



This review followed the PRISMA reporting guidelines for systematic reviews, see Figure 3. The methodological quality of the included papers was evaluated using an adapted version of the Munn *et al.*, (2014) checklist for prevalence studies. The criteria include ten questions exploring the sampling procedures, method and analysis components of the research study.

Figure 3: PRISMA Diagram



Results

As shown in Figure 3 and in Table 1, seven papers were included in the final systematic review. The quality ratings of the studies ranged from 7 to 9.5.

Table 1: Study Characteristics & Critical Review Scores

Reference	Quality Rating	N	Sample Sex	Age
Catterson & Hunter (2010)	9.5	110, From 4 schools	54 males 56 females	8-12 years M=10.08, SD=1.04
Hunter <i>et al.</i> , (2010)	8.5	924 or 925	54% males 46% females	8-12 years M=9.81, SD=0.91
Malecki <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	8.5	612, From 1 school	49% males 51% females	11-13 years
Anderson & Hunter (2012)	8	146, From 3 schools	44% male	10-13 years M=11.5, SD=1.02
Taylor, Sullivan & Kliewer (2013)	7.5	326	54% female 46% male	10-16 years M=12.1, SD=1.6
Gianotta, <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	7	155, From 1 school	81 females 74 males	12-13 years M=12.2, SD=0.5
Hunter, Boyle & Warden (2007)	7	1,429, From 15 schools	50% males 50% females	8-13 M=9.37, SD=0.58

About the Studies

- Four studies were conducted in the UK, 2 in the US, and 1 in Italy. Sample sizes ranged from 110 to 1,429. The age of participants ranged from 10 to 16 and all the studies had a roughly equal proportion of boys and girls. All the surveys employed a cohort survey design.

The relationship between peer victimisation and primary appraisals

- Four of the seven papers analysed the direct relationship between peer victimisation and primary appraisals.

The relationship between peer victimisation and adjustment

- Five of the seven papers explored the direct relationship between peer-victimisation and adjustment.
- One paper found a direct significant relationship between peer victimisation and externalising symptoms, but no direct relationship with internalising symptoms.
- Three of these papers found a direct significant relationship between peer victimisation and the measure of adjustment, however Gianotta *et al.*, (2012) found peer victimisation predicted externalising, but not internalising problems.
- Experiences of peer victimisation were found to be significantly related to loneliness and depressive symptomatology.
- The nature of the peer victimisation was found to play a role, with discriminatory and non-discriminatory victimisation being related to depressive symptomatology (Hunter *et al.*, 2010) and physical, verbal and indirect victimisation significantly predicting anger and sadness (Anderson & Hunter, 2012).

The relationship between peer victimisation, primary appraisals, and adjustment

- Five of the seven papers analysed the relationship between peer victimisation, primary appraisal, and adjustment.
- Control appraisals were found to partially mediate the relationship between peer victimisation and adjustment in two of the studies (Catterson & Hunter, 2010; Hunter *et al.*, 2010).
- Two of the studies (Hunter *et al.*, 2010; Gianotta *et al.*, 2012) found threat appraisals fully mediated or partially mediated the relationship between peer-victimisation and adjustment.
- Taylor *et al.* (2013) found threat appraisals significantly predicted aggressive behaviour depression but found no significant relationships between threat appraisals and depression.
- Finally, threat appraisals, in the form of perceived power imbalance and perceived peer group power imbalance predicted depressive symptoms but only in girls.

Discussion

Across the studies, peer victimisation, primary appraisals and adjustment were measured in different ways, making direct comparison difficult. However, primary appraisals, in the form of threat and control appraisals, have been found to play a role in the relationship between peer victimisation and adjustment. This relationship was found between different types of peer victimisation, such as verbal and physical aggression, and different measures of adjustment. These findings indicate a possible mechanism for how peer victimisation relates to adjustment and future research should explore this relationship further using more diverse measures of primary appraisal.

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