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Drawing from victim precipitation, social comparison, and identity theories, this study develops and tests an integrative model of the victimization of high-performing employees. We examine envy as an explanatory mechanism of the victimization of high performers from fellow group members and propose work group identification as a moderator of this envy mechanism. Study 1, in a sample of 4,874 university staff employees in 339 work groups, supports the proposition that high performers are more likely to be targets of victimization. In Study 2, multisource data collected at 2 time points (217 employees in 67 work groups in 3 organizations), supports the proposition that high performers are more likely to be targets of victimization because of fellow group members' envy, and work group identification mitigates the mediated relationship.

Keywords: victimization, envy, group identification, task performance

Do high performers experience more victimization at work? At first, this question seems surprising because high performers are more likely to be recognized as talented or star players with significant influence on group and organizational performance (see Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2013; Cappelli, 2000; Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001; Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau, & Gerhart, 2003). But the desirable characteristics of high-performing employees may precipitate victimization because of envy toward high performers from their fellow coworkers (for a review on envy, see Duffy, Shaw, & Schaubroeck, 2008; Smith & Kim, 2007). Undoubtedly, an organization must strive to understand victimization that targets any of its employees. However, one might argue that an organization should be particularly interested in the victimization of high performers because it hurts their well-being and productivity, which subsequently results in higher turnover and lower performance (see Aquino & Thau, 2009; Glomb, 2002). Furthermore, the victimization of high performers may undermine the human resource practices (e.g., recruitment and selection, training and development, and motivation) used to promote employee task performance and to enhance organizational performance (see Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

However, this question has received scant research attention (for possible exceptions, see Campbell-Bush, Liao, Chuang, Zhou, & Dong, 2013; Jensen, Patel, & Raver, 2013; Kim & Glomb, 2010; Lam, Van der Vegt, Walter, & Huang, 2011). Previous victimization literature has more often examined the person- and situation-based antecedents (e.g., negative affectivity, work constraints), negative psychological and physiological consequences (e.g., depression, physical symptoms), and prevention and coping strategies (e.g., forgiveness, alcohol consumption) of workplace victimization (for review, see Aquino & Thau, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Exceptions to the lack of research on this question are studies by Kim and Glomb (2010), who found that high-cognitive-ability employees experience more workplace victimization, and Lam et al. (2011), who found that subjective perceptions of upward social comparisons were positively related to interpersonal harming behaviors against high performers. These findings are consistent with the "tall poppy" syndrome (Feather, 1994) and echo popular press reports suggesting high performers often experience victimization and subsequent negative outcomes including diminished well-being, productivity, retention, and organizational performance (see Bruzzese, 2002; Namie & Namie, 2000; Sutton, 2007).

Building on this body of research and anecdotal evidence, we advance our understanding of the mechanisms and boundary conditions of the high-performing victim phenomenon. In doing so, this study makes several contributions to our understanding of the victimization of high-performing employees. First, this study uses a key behavioral outcome—task performance—as the victim precipitation factor that instigates unfavorable social comparison. Previous studies have not explicitly examined the relationship between task performance and victimization (for a possible exception, see Jensen et al., 2013). Although Kim and Glomb's (2010) "smart victims" were supported by linking cognitive ability and victimization and Lam et al.

(2011) used subjective perceptions of upward performance comparisons, both studies argued that these processes may operate through task performance. In the current study, we examine both self- and supervisor-ratings of task performance as well as salary; supervisor-ratings are particularly important as they are used to make employment decisions such as pay, promotion, and training opportunities (see Rynes, Gerhart, & Parks, 2005; Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998).

Second, this study examines the mediating mechanism of envy—an affective manifestation of unfavorable upward comparison—that underlies the relationship between task performance and victimization. Duffy et al. (2008) suggested that envy is widespread in organizations, fueled in part by organizational practices that promote feelings of envy (e.g., performance appraisal, promotion, or compensation systems). Smith and Kim (2007), in their review of envy, implied that to reduce or remove the comparative advantages envied high performers, employees may engage in harming behaviors toward them; however, there is limited research evidence. This study examines the mediating role of envy as theoretically supported by the victim precipitation model (see Aquino, Grover, Bradfield, & Allen, 1999; Curtis, 1974; Schafer, 1968) and social comparison theory (see Festinger, 1954; Smith & Kim, 2007).

Third, this study examines the cross-level moderating role of the group-level construct of work group identification in the relationship between task performance and victimization. Work group identification is proposed to moderate the relationship between task performance and victimization via envy because it alters the social comparison processes and outcomes among work group members (see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Hogg, 2000). Investigating workplace victimization through the lens of group processes underscores the importance of group identification as a situational buffer of unfavorable social comparison and high performer victimization, consistent with research on the role of work group identification in promoting favorable organizational outcomes (see Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008).

We use the term "high-performing victims" to refer to individuals with *relatively* high task performance defined as "behaviors that contribute to the production of a good or the provision of a service" (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002, p. 67), who are targets of workplace victimization, defined as the self-perception of being a target of interpersonal aggression from coworkers (see Aquino & Thau, 2009). Study 1 examines (a) the relationship between task performance and victimization in cross-sectional, self-report data from a university in the United States ($N = 4,874$ employees in 339 work groups). Study 2 extends our model by examining (b) envy as a mechanism of the relationship between task performance and victimization and (c) the moderating role of work group identification in temporally lagged and multisource data from three organizations in South Korea ($N = 217$ employees in 67 work groups). The model is represented in Figure 1.

Derivation of Hypotheses

Envy by Work Group Members as a Mediator of the Task Performance–Victimization Link

Both the victim precipitation model (Curtis, 1974; Gottfredson, 1981; Schafer, 1968, 1977) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) explain the relationship between task performance
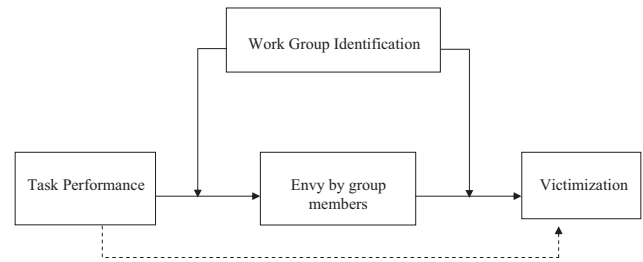

Figure 1. Proposed theoretical model. Note that the dashed line represents Study 1; the solid line represents Study 2.

and victimization. The victim precipitation model suggests the overarching framework of the proposed relationship in its contention that victims either unintentionally or intentionally instigate potential perpetrators to react to them with harmful behavior. According to this model, individual characteristics or behaviors operate as critical precipitating factors that put people at risk of victimization. For example, negative affectivity, aggressiveness, self-determination, and dominating interpersonal behavior are treated as precipitating factors (for review, see Aquino & Thau, 2009). High task performance can be one such precipitating factor because, compared to other employees, high performers are likely to enjoy more financial and social resources such as higher pay, more opportunities for promotion, higher social status, and more attention and recognition (see Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Bauer & Green, 1996). These additional resources may provoke other members to react to them with harmful behavior. For example, Peterson and Ray (2006a) found that high grades were positively related to victimization; students reasoned that "gifted kids have the upper hand in classrooms" and "good kids usually get what they want" (Peterson & Ray, 2006b, p. 257). Despite empirical evidence these victim characteristics precipitate victimization, the theoretical processes connecting these characteristics to victimization requires greater elaboration. Social comparison theory picks up this theme and guides the specific theoretical mechanisms of the proposed relationships (Festinger, 1954).

We propose that high-performing employees may instigate unfavorable upward social comparison from fellow group members (i.e., potential perpetrators), which results in harmful behaviors against high performers. Across multiple organizational settings and jobs, high performers are generally treated as key or star players in a work group because of their significant influence on work group or organization performance (Cappelli, 2000; Michaels et al., 2001; Sturman et al., 2003). People who are working smarter and harder are more likely to be high performers and achieve career success (see Judge, Klinger, & Simon, 2010; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994; Schmidt & Hunter, 2004). Given that employees spend much of their work hours interacting and collaborating with other work group members to accomplish their tasks in most workplace settings (see Grant & Parker, 2009; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003), work group members are easily aware of other members' performance compared with their own (see Molleman, Nauta, & Buunk, 2007). Following unfavorable social comparison with high performers, other work group members may experience negative psychological states (e.g., lowered self-evaluations, emo-

tions of envy), which results in harmful behaviors against high performers.

Social comparison theorists argue that *in the case of abilities or performance*, people are generally involved in upward comparison rather than in downward comparison (i.e., upward drive; Festinger, 1954). Festinger (1954) proposed that "given a range of possible persons for comparison, someone close to one's own ability or opinion will be chosen for comparison" (p. 121). Since most people, however, have more favorable views of themselves than objective evidence warrants (Greenwald, 1980; Taylor & Brown, 1988), they generally choose high performers as targets of comparison (i.e., upward comparison, Lam et al., 2011). Furthermore, individuals are more likely to select a "standard setter" who has high levels of competence as the target of comparison (Feldman & Ruble, 1981; Goethals, 1986; Goethals & Darley, 1977). In addition, given that high performance is valued in organizations and has concomitant valued outcomes fueled by organizational evaluation and reward systems, high performers are likely to receive more attention and visibility in their work group, thus inviting upward social comparison (see Weick, 1995).

Similar comparison processes are presented in the self-evaluation maintenance model (Tesser, 1988) and the relative deprivation model (Crosby, 1976, 1984), which emphasize upward social comparison. The self-evaluation model suggests that individuals try to maintain a positive self-evaluation, and this evaluation is influenced by one's relationships with others—particularly others who are psychologically close to the individual (e.g., family, friends, and coworkers). Self-evaluation is influenced by the processes of *reflection* and *comparison*. Reflection occurs when the successful performance of a close person is mirrored in oneself and thus improves one's self-evaluation; such reflection generally occurs when the performance is in a domain not relevant to one's self-definition. However, when successful performance of another is in a domain relevant to one's self-definition, comparison processes will instead occur and result in lowered self-evaluation. High task performance in a work setting is strongly related to competence—a fundamental need of human beings (Deci & Ryan, 2002)—thus, comparison, instead of reflection, would occur as this is a characteristic relevant to one's self-definition. Relative deprivation has been used as an explanatory mechanism for a variety of phenomena in the social and organizational sciences, and it shares similar theoretical mechanisms with the social comparison and the self-evaluation models. Like these models, relative deprivation processes are dependent on a comparison process that is focused on what others have (that one does not), the result of which leads to behavior engagement to reduce the deprivation. The underlying similarities of these theories undergird the idea that upward social comparison on a relevant dimension (e.g., task performance) with other employees lowers one's self-evaluation and heightens the sense of relative deprivation.

These upward comparison processes that focus on both the self-lacking and the other-possessing result in lowered self-evaluations and emotional reactions such as envy (De Paola, 2001; Parrott & Smith, 1993; Salovey & Rothman, 1991; Smith, 2000; Smith & Kim, 2007), depressive feelings (e.g., Beck, 1967; Gilbert, 1992; Smith, Parrott, Ozer, & Moniz, 1994), shame (e.g., Gilbert, 1992; Lewis, 1992), and hostility (Solomon, 1976). These negative states are affective manifestations of lowered self-evaluations following unfavorable upward comparison (e.g., Tes-ser, Millar, & Moore, 1988; Tesser, Pilkington, & McIntosh, 1989) and may promote the desire for restoration of decreased self-evaluation by enacting aggressive behaviors toward high performers.

In this study, we focus on envy—"an unpleasant, often painful emotion characterized by feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment caused by an awareness of a desired attribute enjoyed by another person" (Smith & Kim, 2007, p. 46)—rather than several other negative affective states mentioned above because envy captures both self-lacking emotions (e.g., shame and depressed feelings) and other-possessing emotions (e.g., resentment and hostility) that come from unfavorable upward comparison (Smith, 2000). The envious person can restore his or her self-evaluation by altering the envied person's outcomes; one way to achieve this goal is by harming the envied person (Duffy et al., 2008; Vecchio, 1995). Previous research has supported the notion that an envious person may harm the envied person (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper, & Aquino, 2012; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Mouly & Sankaran, 2002; Salovey & Rodin, 1984; Vecchio, 2007), and this harm negatively alters the envied person's outcomes including job performance and satisfaction (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Exline & Lobel, 1999). Research suggests that harming the envied other decreases the envious person's frustration stemming from his or her sense of inferiority (Fox & Spector, 1999; Kulik & Brown, 1979; Smith, 1991; Spector, 1975, 1978) and restores the envious person's damaged self-esteem (Fein & Spencer, 1997). Simply put, high-performing employees are more likely to be the targets of envy by potential perpetrators and, as a result, may be more likely to be victimized.

Hypothesis 1: Relative task performance of targets is positively related to their victimization.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between relative task performance of targets and victimization is mediated by the perpetrators' emotion of envy toward the targets.

Work Group Identification as a Contextual Moderator

Thus far, we have suggested that task performance is positively associated with victimization via envy at the individual-level. Given the importance of social context on individual-level psychological states and behaviors (see Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) over and above individual characteristics as well as the critical role of work group identification in upward social comparison (see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Hogg, 2000) and interpersonal aggression (see Duffy et al., 2012; Opotow, 1995), we suggest work group identification as a moderator of the relationship between task performance and victimization via envy. Specifically, when work group identification is high, negative emotional states of upward social comparison such as envy and action tendencies such as aggressive behaviors toward targets of envy are deactivated. Work group identification is defined as shared perceptions among group members of the degree to which people merge their sense of self with the group (see Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). We conceptualized work group identification as a group-level construct because work groups "differ systematically in terms of whether members define themselves as part of a team, whether they view this membership positively, and whether they

have an affinity for other team members" (Duffy et al., 2012, p. 652).

Theoretically, work group identification moderates the positive relationship between task performance and victimization via envy because it alters the unfavorable social comparison processes in three key ways. Work group identification changes (a) the targets of comparison from fellow high performers to other groups, (b) the source of self-evaluation from personal capability (e.g., high individual task performance) to group capability, and (c) the perceptions toward other group members from "they" to "we" (see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Flynn, 2005; Hogg, 2000; Smith, Coats, & Walling, 1999). An experimental study by Brewer and Weber (1994) found that participants in a low group identification condition were more negative in their self-evaluation after they compared themselves with high-performing individuals (i.e., those with high cognitive ability test scores) in their group, but they were not affected by intergroup comparison. In contrast, participants in a high group identification condition were more positive in their self-evaluation after they compared themselves with high-performing individuals in their group; they were more negative in their self-evaluation after they compared themselves with high-performing individuals outside of their group (i.e., intergroup comparison). Another experimental study by Gardner, Gabriel, and Hochschild (2002) found a moderating role of self-expansion in social comparison. When one's self-view expands to include group memberships, group members' successes (e.g., scores on ability tests similar to the Graduate Record Examination), even in self-relevant domains, improve self-evaluations rather than threaten them.

Given that group identification alters social comparison processes and outcomes (i.e., the frame of reference, source of self-evaluation, and perceptions toward fellow members in the group; Brewer & Gardner, 1996), work group identification may prevent envy—an affective manifestation of unfavorable upward comparison—toward high performers. When group members share strong work group identification, they are less focused on individual performance and more focused on whether their group performance is better than other groups, which then becomes a source of positive self-evaluation (see Brewer & Weber, 1994). In this situation, high performers enhance fellow group members' self-evaluation because high performers contribute more to group performance than do other group members (see Cappelli, 2000; Devine & Philips, 2001; Heslin, 1964; LePine, 2003; LePine, Hanson, Borman, & Motowidlo, 2000; Steiner, 1972; Michaels et al., 2001; Sturman et al., 2003); fellow group members perceive that group success is equivalent to their own success because they integrate the work group into their self-concepts (see Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Gardner et al., 2002; Kramer, Hanna, Su, & Wei, 2001). Therefore, high performers are less likely to be the targets of envy when work group identification is high.

Thus far, we have suggested that work group identification prevents envy toward high performers from taking place. But even if envy does occur, work group identification should reduce the likelihood of victimization of high performers following such envy. Opotow (1995) suggested that our sense of morality is stronger toward those who "are closer to us and weaker [toward] those who are psychologically distant" (p. 351). When work group identification is high, group members have a more expansive and

broad circle of morality toward other group members (including high performers) because high identification creates the perception of them as similar and close. In contrast, when work group identification is low, group members have an exclusive and narrow circle of morality which is less likely to be inclusive of the group and its high performers. Put simply, high work group identity drives group members to perceive close connections with all group members including high performers who provoke envy, and thus creates a sense of moral obligation toward these close others. Based on this argument, Duffy et al. (2012) found that work group identification deactivated threat-oriented action tendencies such as harming behaviors toward targets of envy by preventing moral disengagement. When work group identification is high, the victimization of high performers is less likely to follow from envy because it intensifies the sense of morality surrounding harming behaviors (e.g., perpetrators experience more guilt) toward the targets of envy. Put simply, although envy does take place, work group identification weakens the likelihood that envy will develop into harming behaviors.

In summary, work group identification moderates the high performance victimization link in two ways: (a) by preventing the envy toward high performers from taking place by restoring potential perpetrators' self-evaluation and (b) by deactivating their behavioral tendency to harm high performers following envy by intensifying their sense of morality.

Hypothesis 3: Work group identification moderates the relationship between relative task performance and victimization via envy, such that when work group identification is high, both the relative task performance—envy link and envy—victimization link will be weaker than when work group identification is low.

In Study 1, we sought to establish the main relationship between task performance and victimization (H1). In Study 2, we tested envy as a mechanism of the relationship between task performance and victimization (H2) and the moderating role that work group identification plays in shaping the high-performing victim phenomenon via envy (H3).

Study 1

Method

Procedure and participants. A total of 13,373 survey invitations were sent out to staff employees at a large university in the Midwestern United States, and 6,071 replies were received for a response rate of 45%. Using a unique identifier, this data set was linked with organizational administrative records, which identified each participant's work department or unit (e.g., organizational behavior department in the business school or organizational unit such as office of student services) and demographic information (e.g., age, gender, and race). After conducting listwise deletion of study variables with incomplete information the sample size was 5,269 employees. We also eliminated work units with fewer than three individuals (cf. Glomb & Liao, 2003), given our analyses that account for the nested data structure (details below). The final sample size was composed of 4,874 employees in 339 work groups ($M = 14.38$. $SD = 19.85$). Ninety-one percent of respondents were

Caucasian, and 67% of respondents were women. The average organizational tenure was 12 years, and the average age of respondents was 44 years.

Measures.

Task performance. Task performance was assessed using the four-item task performance scale (Welbourne et al., 1998) and salary. Regarding the task performance scale, items were "My quantity of work output is . . . ," "My quality of work output is . . . ," "My accuracy of work is . . . ," and "My customer service provided (internal and external) is . . ." The item stem was modified as "Compared to other employees with similar jobs . . ." Farh and Dobbins (1989) found that adding comparative performance information (CPI) to measure task performance increased the accuracy of self-ratings and the agreement between self- and supervisor ratings of task performance. Respondents were instructed to consider their performance review or feedback by their supervisor over the past year. The participants responded to an 11-point scale from 0 (*at a very low level compared to other employees*) to 10 (*at a very high level compared to other employees*). The coefficient alpha of the task performance scale was .76. Mean-level comparison showed that the self-ratings of task performance were not overly inflated (on a 5-point scale of 1–5, $M = 3.83$ compared with $M = 4.23$–4.29 in Welbourne et al., 1998).

As an alternative measure of task performance, we used salary, drawn from organizational administrative records. High performance can be instrumental for obtaining desired outcomes such as high salary, which has been used as an extrinsic career success outcome (e.g., Judge, Higgins, Thoreson, & Barrick, 1999) and complements our self-report measure.

Victimization. Victimization was assessed using an eight-item victimization scale from Aquino et al. (1999). Sample items were, "Said bad things about you to your coworkers," "Lied to get you in trouble," and "Did something to make you look bad." Participants were instructed to respond based on the number of times they experienced a coworker directing the described behaviors toward them over the past year using the 5-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*once a week or more*). The coefficient alpha of the victimization scale was .82.

Control variables. Guided by previous workplace victimization literature (e.g., Aquino & Thau, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006), we controlled for demographics (i.e., age, gender, race, and tenure), personality traits (i.e., positive and negative affectivity),

and stress. Specifically, early research by Hentig (1948) and Schafer (1968) suggested that older individuals and females were more likely to be victims. However, recent empirical evidence on the relationship between employee demographics and victimization showed mixed findings and fairly small correlations (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). For example, some researchers found no significant correlations between demographics and victimization (e.g., Vartia, 1996), whereas others have found significant relationships (e.g., Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). Personality traits such as negative affectivity generally showed consistent links with victimization ($r = .21$; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Thus, we used the 10-item international Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form (I-PANAS-SF; Thompson, 2007; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) with five-item PA and NA subscales ($\alpha = .75$ & .74, respectively, 1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *very much*), to control for positive and negative affectivity. Sample PA items were "inspired," "active," and "determined," and NA items were "upset," "hostile," and "ashamed." Stress is related to victimization because stress may generate negative affective and behavioral responses that spark victimization. Also, the high level of stress reported by victims may imply the presence of ambient stressors experienced by work group members (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). We controlled for stress using two items adapted from four-item subjective stress scale ($\alpha = .83$; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*; Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986). Sample items were, "I feel a great deal of stress because of my job," and "I almost never feel stressed at work."

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 1. Task performance and salary were significantly correlated with victimization ($r = .12$, $p < .01$ and $r = .05$, $p < .05$, respectively). The correlation between task performance and salary ($r = .13$, $p < .01$) was within the range found in previous research (e.g., Ferris, Witt, & Hochwarter, 2001 [$r = .44$]; Harris, Gilbreath, & Sunday, 1998 [$r = .00$–.09]; Joshi, Liao, & Jackson, 2006 [$r = .10$]; Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997 [$r = .28$]). Several control variables such as negative affectivity ($r = .18$, $p < .01$) and job stress ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) were also significantly correlated with victimization. This pattern and magnitude of correlations were consistent with the Bowling and

Table 1
Study 1 Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age (years)	44.44	11.73									
2. Gender	0.66	0.47	−.02								
3. Organizational tenure (years)	11.80	10.44	.60	−.01							
4. Race	0.91	0.28	.06	.02	.10						
5. Job stress	3.59	1.11	.05	.02	.11	.04					
6. Positive affectivity	3.83	0.47	.16	.04	.02	−.04	−.02				
7. Negative affectivity	2.15	0.50	−.10	.02	−.02	.04	.26	−.34			
8. Task performance	7.43	1.42	.06	.03	.08	−.03	.12	.24	−.12		
9. Salary	$54,528.50	$26,537.41	.31	−.19	.23	.06	.18	.15	−.06	.13	
10. Victimization	1.30	0.48	−.04	−.03	.00	−.02	.24	.00	.18	.12	.05

Note. For individual-level, $N = 4,874$; for group-level, $N = 339$. Correlations greater than .03 are significant at $p < .05$; those greater than .04 are significant at $p < .01$. Gender: female = 1, male = 0. Race: Caucasian = 1, minority = 0.

Beehr's (2006) meta-analytic review ($r = .21$ for negative affectivity; $r = .22$–.44 for job stress related variables) and previous literature (e.g., Kim & Glomb, 2010; $r = .24$–.41).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that task performance was positively related to victimization. To test this link, we conducted random coefficient modeling (RCM) analyses (also widely known as hierarchical linear modeling) to account for the nested structure of data (i.e., employees within a work group). We also group-mean centered Level 1 predictors except for the dichotomized gender and race variables to capture the relative position of the group member in the group (i.e., each person's data are centered around the group mean). First, we estimated a null model with no predictors at either the individual- or the group-level to confirm between-group variations in victimization, intraclass correlation $(ICC)(1) = \tau_{00}/(\tau_{00} + \sigma^2) = .05$. Results suggested that RCM analyses were appropriate because 5% of variance in victimization resided between work groups, and 95% of variance resided within work groups.

Next, we estimated the relationship between task performance and victimization. As shown in Models 2 and 3 in Table 2, task performance and salary were positively related to victimization ($\gamma = .11$, $p = .00$, $t = 7.45$ and $\gamma = .03$, $p = .04$, $t = 2.06$, respectively). In Model 4 of Table 2, we tested the combined roles of task performance and salary: task performance was significantly related to victimization ($\gamma = .11$, $p = .00$, $t = 7.35$) and salary was marginally related to victimization ($\gamma = .03$, $p = .098$, $t = 1.66$). Therefore, while there was support for H1 with both measures of performance, task performance was statistically stronger predictor of victimization than was salary.

The findings from Study 1 support our hypothesis that high performers experience more victimization from their coworkers. Although Study 1 contributes to the literature by presenting initial evidence of the high-performing victim phenomenon using a large data set with a variety of job categories (e.g., administrative

specialists, library managers, fiscal officers, information technology professionals, and food service workers), it did not examine mediating mechanisms of the relationship or moderating effects. In Study 2, we attempt to overcome these limitations by testing mediating and moderating mechanisms to understand why and when high performers experience victimization using a more rigorous research design including a temporally lagged design and multiple data sources (i.e., supervisor-ratings of task performance and peer-ratings of envy). We tested the mediating role of envy by work group members on the relationship between task performance and victimization and the moderating role of work group identification on the mediated relationship using moderated-mediation model (see Edwards & Lambert, 2007).

Study 2

Method

Procedure and participants. Participants were drawn from three organizations (one government agency, two small advertising agencies) in South Korea. The government agency provides public service (e.g., public transportation management, public health management, and business support) in one of the largest metropolitan areas in Korea. A work group is the smallest core entity in this organization, and there are three higher entities (i.e., unit, department, and division) as well as a top management team. The two small advertising agencies provide advertising related service (e.g., copywriting and production) for their clients. These firms have a flat organizational structure and a work group is the smallest core entity; a work group consists of its members and a leader, and it reports to a chief director. Although each work group member may have different responsibilities, all members have common goals and are likely to know one other well because the average work group tenure is around 2 years. For example, in the

Table 2
Study 1 Random Coefficient Modeling Results

Variable	Victimization			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	$-.05 (.02)^{**}$	$-.05 (.02)^{**}$	$-.06 (.02)^{**}$	$-.06 (.02)^{**}$
Gender	$-.02 (.03)$	$-.03 (.03)$	$-.01 (.03)$	$-.02 (.03)$
Race	$-.09 (.05)^{*}$	$-.08 (.05)^{\dagger}$	$-.10 (.05)^{*}$	$-.09 (.05)^{*}$
Tenure	$.01 (.02)$	$.00 (.02)$	$.01 (.02)$	$-.00 (.02)$
Job stress	$.21 (.01)^{**}$	$.19 (.01)^{**}$	$.20 (.01)^{**}$	$.19 (.01)^{**}$
Positive affectivity	$.06 (.01)^{**}$	$.04 (.02)^{**}$	$.06 (.01)^{**}$	$.04 (.02)^{**}$
Negative affectivity	$.14 (.01)^{**}$	$.15 (.01)^{**}$	$.15 (.01)^{**}$	$.15 (.01)^{**}$
Task performance		$.11 (.02)^{**}$		$.11 (.02)^{**}$
Salary			$.03 (.02)^{*}$	$.03 (.02)^{\dagger}$
Model deviance	13,237.12	13,182.04	13,232.88	13,179.30
Pseudo R^2	.08	.09	.09	.10

Note. For individual-level, $N = 4,874$; for group-level, $N = 339$. Values are standardized random coefficient modeling coefficients, except gender and race (standard errors in parentheses). Model deviance ($-2 \times$ log-likelihood of the full maximum-likelihood estimate) is an indicator of model fit; the smaller the deviance, the better the model fit. Pseudo R^2 values were calculated on the basis of the formula $1 - [(Level 1 restricted error/n) + Level 2 restricted error]/[(Level 1 unrestricted error/n) + Level 2 unrestricted error[, from Snijders and Bosker (1999). n is the average number of individuals in each Level 2 unit. Pseudo R^2 is solely for model comparison and cannot be interpreted as explained variance of the outcome variable or compared across different data sets (Hox, 2010). Gender: female = 1, male = 0. Race: Caucasian = 1, minority = 0.
$^{\dagger} p < .10.$ $^{*} p < .05.$ $^{**} p < .01.$ Two-tailed test.

child health care group of the government agency, some members have responsibilities regarding immunization, while others have responsibilities regarding food and nutrition or family planning. The first author worked with a senior organizational leader in each of these organizations (i.e., the human resource officers in a government agency, the chief directors of advertising agencies) to conduct the data collection. Senior leaders communicated information about the study via flyers to work groups, company-wide e-mails, and/or work group manager meetings. Confidentiality was assured. Consistent with previous research (e.g., George, 1990; Liao & Rupp, 2005), we considered employees to be members of a work group when they had the same supervisor.

At Time 1, supervisors rated study participants' task performance and work group members completed a survey about work group identification, and other control variables (e.g., demographic information, personality). At Time 2, work group members completed a social network survey regarding envy using a sociomatrix that lists all work group members' names (see Marsden, 1990) and a survey regarding workplace victimization. Data were collected via the Internet. The interval between Time 1 and Time 2 ranged from 3 to 5 weeks. Work group members were paid up to 30,000 Korean Won (i.e., 10,000 Korean Won for the first survey; 20,000 for the second survey), which is equivalent to $30 USD, and supervisors were paid 10,000 Korean Won, which is equivalent to $10 USD.

The Appendix shows sample characteristics (e.g., company size, response rates) for each organization. One hundred ninety-three work groups consisting of 957 members were invited to participate in this study; 95 work groups consisting of 342 members expressed interest in this study. Work group size was limited to two to 10 members because this survey required social network surveys as well as supervisor performance ratings. Ninety-three work groups consisting of 305 members met this condition; 85 work groups consisting of 266 members completed the first survey. Because network-based envy measures require a high response rate (e.g., 80% of all members in a work group; see Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001) to represent an accurate depiction of the network in a work group, we excluded work groups with less than 80% participation at Time 1 in our invitations for Time 2. We invited 74 work groups consisting of 237 members to the second survey. This process resulted in a final usable sample of 67 work groups consisting of 217 members, yielding an average response rate of 23% at the individual level and 35% at the group-level. These 67 work groups had an average 98% within group response rate. We compared the final usable sample to the sample from Time 1 with insufficient workgroup response rates and found no significant differences between the included and the excluded employees.

Work group sizes (excluding the supervisor), ranged from 2 to 7 ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.35$). The average age of work group members was 38.18 years ($SD = 8.64$); 49% were female. Most (63.59%) had a bachelor's degree, 14.75% completed high school, 15.67% completed a 2-year college degree, and 5.99% had graduate degrees (i.e., master's or doctorate degree). Average tenures at the organization and in the work group were 9.97 ($SD = 8.68$) and 2.02 ($SD = 1.85$) years, respectively. The average age of the work group supervisor was 48.81 years ($SD = 7.63$); 30% were female. Most (61.64%) had a bachelor's degree, 13.7% completed only high school, 6.85% completed a 2-year college degree, and 16.44% had graduate degrees (i.e., master's or doctorate degree).

Average tenures at the organization and the work group were 16.82 ($SD = 10.85$) and 2.69 ($SD = 2.44$) years, respectively.

Measures. Following Brislin's (1980) method, scales were translated from English into Korean. First, the items were translated from English into Korean by two individuals who are proficient in both languages (i.e., the first author and a bilingual individual who was not familiar with the study). Second, two bilingual individuals not familiar with the study conducted back-translation, checked translation accuracy, identified areas of concerns, and modified the questions. Third, the first author and another management scholar compared the survey documents and made changes until no further modifications were necessary. Finally, the senior organizational leaders confirmed the clarity of the survey items. For all measures, we asked participants to consider their experiences and psychological states over the past 6 months, unless otherwise stated.

Task performance. Task performance was assessed using the four-item task performance scale (Welbourne et al., 1998) with an item stem, "Compared to other employees in this work group . . ." (cf. Farh & Dobbins, 1989). Unlike in Study 1, which used self-report performance, in Study 2 supervisors evaluated the work group members' task performance specifically related to one's job description on a 5-point scale from 1 (*at a very low level compared to other work group members*) to 5 (*at a very high level compared to other work group members*). The coefficient alpha of the task performance scale was .92.

Envy. Envy was measured using in-degree envy centrality. In-degree envy centrality counts the envy relationships with a focal actor (i.e., a high-performing employee) reported by other actors (i.e., fellow work group members) in the work group network. It implies the focal actor is the envy of other actors in a work group. Participants were asked a single-item network question. To make the interpretation of the single-item network measure clear and reduce ambiguity, we provided a detailed explanation with examples from established scales (see Ferrin, Dirks, & Shah, 2006, for a same approach). Specifically, participants were asked the following single-item network question with four examples: "I envy this person's task performance. For example, (a) it is so frustrating to see this person succeed so easily; (b) feelings of envy toward this person constantly torment me; (c) I generally feel inferior to this person's success; or (d) this person's success makes me resent this person." The wording of these examples was from Schaubroeck and Lam (2004). Participants responded to a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). We calculated an envy-centrality score using the following formula: the sum of all respondents' responses toward a focal actor divided by the number of respondents in a work group excluding the focal individual (i.e., normed in-degree centrality that controls for differences in group sizes, see Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Put simply, the envy measure for each work group member was the average score from ratings provided by the other work group members (excluding the focal member).

Victimization. Victimization was assessed using an eight-item victimization scale from Aquino et al. (1999). We emphasized the source of victimization as a work group member and modified one item "made an ethnic, racial, religious, or offensive slur toward you" by dropping "ethnic and racial" terms because there are no ethnic and racial differences in this setting. Participants responded to the item stem "How often has a work group member . . ." on a 5-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often: once a week or more*).

Sample items were "Made an offensive slur toward you?" and "Cursed at you?" The coefficient alpha of the victimization scale was .86.

Work group identification. Work group identification was assessed using five items from the six-item scale of Mael and Ashforth (1992). The scale was modified to reflect the work group context (i.e., change the target of identification from school to work group) and one item—"If a story in the media criticized the school, I would feel embarrassed"—was deleted because it was deemed inappropriate in the work group context. Sample items were "When someone criticizes this work group, it feels like a personal insult," "When I talk about other people in this work group, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they,'" and "The successes of the people in this work group are my successes." Participants responded to a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha of the work group identification scale was .90. Aggregation was justified by $r_{wg(j)}$ = .88, the reliability of individual assessment of the group mean, ICC(1) = .46, and the group mean, ICC(2) = .73. *F*-test results also supported aggregation (*F* = 3.72, *p* < .01). Overall, $r_{wg(j)}$, ICC(1), and ICC(b) values were comparable to values in the broader organizational behavior literature (see Bliese, 2000; LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

Control variables. Consistent with rationales described in Study 1, we controlled for age, gender, and work group tenure, positive and negative affectivity (α = .74 and .87, respectively; Thompson, 2007; Watson et al., 1988), and stress (α = .85; Motowidlo et al., 1986; four-item scale). In addition, given we included data from three different organizations and multiple group comparisons in analysis of variance results suggest some small differences (i.e., the government agency had higher average age than the two advertising agencies), we controlled for organizations using two dummy variables.

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 3. Task performance was significantly correlated with victimization (*r* = .15, *p* < .05). Envy was significantly correlated with victimization (*r* = .26, *p* < .01) but not with task performance (*r* = .12, *ns*). Consistent with the Study 1 and previous studies (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Kim & Glomb, 2010), several control variables such as negative affectivity (*r* = .29, *p* < .01) and job stress (*r* = .17, *p* < .01) were significantly correlated with victimization.

We conducted RCM analyses with group-mean centering of Level 1 predictors except for the dichotomized gender variable to account for the nested structure of data. First, we estimated a null model with no predictors at either the individual- or the group-level to confirm between-group variations in victimization, ICC(1) = τ_{00} /(τ_{00} + σ^2) = .10, and envy, ICC(1) = τ_{00} /(τ_{00} + σ^2) = .33. It implied that 10% of variance in victimization resided between work groups, and 90% of variance resided within work groups. In addition, 33% of variance in envy resided between work groups, and 67% of variance resided within work groups. Results suggest RCM analyses were appropriate.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that task performance was positively related to victimization as mediated by envy. To test this mediating mechanism, we first estimated a model where task performance was related to envy. Next, we included task performance and envy together in predicting victimization. In the final step, we calculated the indirect effect with bootstrapped confidence intervals on the basis of 1,000 random samples (see Krull & MacKinnon, 2001; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Zhang & Peterson, 2011).

Table 4 presents the mediation results. As shown in Model 6 in Table 4, task performance was positively related to victimization (γ = .28, *p* = .00, *t* = 4.22), confirming the Hypothesis 1 results in Study 1. To test Hypothesis 2 regarding the role of envy as a mediator, we examined whether task performance is positively related to envy. As shown in Model 2 in Table 4, task performance was positively related to envy (γ = .20, *p* = .00, *t* = 2.91). Finally, as shown in Model 7 in Table 4, task performance was still significant with decreased coefficient size (γ = .24, *p* = .00, *t* = 3.63), and envy was significantly related to victimization (γ = .22,

Table 3
Study 2 Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Individual-level													
1. Organization 1	0.77	0.42											
2. Organization 2	0.10	0.30	−.60										
3. Organization 3	0.13	0.34	−.72	−.13									
4. Age (years)	38.18	8.64	.60	−.33	−.46								
5. Gender	0.49	0.50	−.07	−.04	.13	−.33							
6. Work group tenure (years)	2.02	1.85	−.07	.02	.06	.04	−.02						
7. Job stress	3.36	0.78	.05	−.14	.06	−.05	.09	−.05					
8. Positive affectivity	3.02	0.70	.20	−.32	.03	.09	−.09	−.01	.04				
9. Negative affectivity	2.20	0.78	.16	−.18	−.04	.05	.01	−.04	.57	.06			
10. Envy	1.81	0.81	−.03	.05	.00	−.01	.06	−.07	.03	−.02	−.01		
11. Task performance	4.09	0.72	.23	−.22	−.09	.18	.03	.11	−.08	.23	−.06	.12	
12. Victimization	1.28	0.41	−.09	.10	.02	.02	−.09	.01	.17	−.06	.29	.26	.15
Group-level													
13. Work group identification	3.57	0.64											

Note. For individual-level, *N* = 217; for group-level, *N* = 67. Correlations greater than .14 are significant at *p* < .05; those greater than .17 are significant at *p* < .01. Gender: female = 1, male = 0.

Table 4

Study 2 Moderated-Mediation Random Coefficient Modeling Results

Variable	First stage (dependent variable = envy)				Second stage (dependent variable = victimization)				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Organization 1	.21 (.30)	−.26 (.30)	−.29 (.30)	−.29 (.30)	−.32 (.23)	−.38 (.23)	−.35 (.22)	−.45 (.20)*	−.44 (.20)*
Organization 2	.24 (.42)	.29 (.43)	.20 (.45)	.24 (.44)	.32 (.29)	.38 (.30)	.33 (.29)	−.10 (.27)	−.12 (.27)
Age	.14 (.08)†	.11 (.08)	.11 (.08)	.12 (.08)	.09 (.09)	.05 (.08)	.05 (.08)	.05 (.08)	.05 (.08)
Gender	.22 (.13)†	.18 (.13)	.17 (.13)	.18 (.13)	−.16 (.14)	−.23 (.13)†	−.25 (.13)†	−.28 (.12)*	−.31 (.12)**
Tenure	−.05 (.06)	−.07 (.06)	−.07 (.06)	−.08 (.06)	.00 (.06)	−.04 (.06)	−.01 (.06)	−.02 (.06)	−.03 (.06)
Job stress	.02 (.07)	.04 (.07)	.04 (.07)	.04 (.07)	.03 (.08)	.05 (.07)	.03 (.07)	.06 (.07)	.08 (.07)
Positive affectivity	.01 (.07)	−.02 (.06)	−.01 (.06)	−.01 (.06)	−.04 (.07)	−.08 (.07)	−.08 (.06)	−.05 (.06)	−.05 (.06)
Negative affectivity	−.13 (.08)†	−.12 (.07)	−.12 (.07)	−.12 (.07)†	.30 (.08)**	.31 (.08)**	.32 (.07)**	.29 (.07)**	.28 (.07)**
Task performance		.20 (.07)**	.19 (.07)**	.17 (.07)**		.28 (.07)**	.24 (.07)**	.20 (.06)**	.19 (.06)**
Work group identification			−.07 (.10)	−.08 (.10)				−.30 (.06)**	−.29 (.06)**
Task Performance × Work Group identification				−.09 (.05)†					
Envy							.22 (.06)**	.20 (.06)**	.21 (.06)**
Envy × Work Group identification									−.11 (.06)†
Model deviance	584.20	576.02	575.52	572.24	584.54	568.36	555.86	535.80	532.08
Pseudo R^2	.04	.08	.08	.10	.07	.18	.22	.27	.29

Note. For individual-level, $N = 217$; for group-level, $N = 67$. Values are standardized random coefficient modeling coefficients, except gender (standard errors in parentheses). Model deviance ($−2 \times$ log-likelihood of the full maximum-likelihood estimate) is an indicator of model fit; the smaller the deviance, the better the model fit. Pseudo R^2 values were calculated on the basis of the formula $1 − $ [(Level 1 restricted error/n) + Level 2 restricted error]/[(Level 1 unrestricted error/n) + Level 2 unrestricted error[, from Snijders and Bosker (1999). n is the average number of individuals in each Level 2 unit. Pseudo R^2 is solely for model comparison and cannot be interpreted as explained variance of the outcome variable or compared across different data sets (Hox, 2010).Gender: female = 1, male = 0.
† $p < .10$.   * $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$. Two-tailed test.

$p = .00, t = 3.61$). The bootstrapped 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect via envy (i.e., the product of coefficients of task performance—envy and envy—victimization links) did not include zero [.01, .07], suggesting that envy partially mediated the relationship between task performance and victimization. Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted the relationship between task performance and victimization via envy was moderated by work group identification. Following the moderated-mediation method suggested by Edwards and Lambert (2007), we tested whether the strength of the envy mechanism between task performance and victimization is dependent on work group identification such that (a) the relationship between task performance and envy (i.e., the first stage) and (b) the relationship between envy and victimization (i.e., the second stage) would be weaker when work groups are higher in work group identification (see Duffy et al., 2012, for empirical examples of moderated-mediation in multilevel models).

To test these cross-level moderated-mediation effects, we estimated the cross-level moderated-mediation models by adding individual- and group-level predictors with interaction terms. Following the recommendation of Hofmann and Gavin (1998), we grand-mean centered the Level 2 predictors to reduce the effects of multicollinearity. Given that $p < .10$ is a reasonable cutoff standard to achieve the best balance between statistical power and Type I errors in the case of cross-level moderation tests (LaHuis & Ferguson, 2009), we interpreted RCM coefficients at $p < .10$ level of significance using a two-tailed test (i.e., $p < .05$ if one-tailed).

As reported in Models 4 and 9 of Table 4, work group identification moderated the relationship between task performance and envy (first stage, $\gamma = −.09, p = .07, t = 1.82$), and the relationship between envy and victimization (second stage, $\gamma = −.11, p = .05, t = 1.93$). Table 5 shows the analysis of indirect and total effects for victimization split by high and low work group identification in the case of envy as a mediator (i.e., slope difference test). Follow-

Table 5

Study 2 Path Analytic Results: Indirect and Total Effects of Task Performance (Via Envy) on Victimization at Low and High Levels of Work Group Identification

Variable	First stage (Pmx)	Second stage (Pym)	Direct effect (Pyx)	Indirect effect (PymPmx)	Total effect (Pyx + PymPmx)
Simple paths for *low* work group identification	.26**	.32*	.19**	.08*	.27**
Simple paths for *high* work group identification	.08	.10*	.19**	.01†	.20**
Differences	−.18†	−.22†	.00	−.08*	−.08*

Note. Significance tests for the indirect, total, and differences in these effects were based on bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from 1,000 bootstrap estimates. Pmx (first stage indirect effect) = path from task performance to envy; Pym (second stage indirect effect) = path from envy to victimization; Pyx = path from task performance to victimization.
† $p < .10$.   * $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$. Two-tailed test.

ing recommendations from Edwards and Lambert (2007), we used bootstrapping methods to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals on the basis of 1,000 random samples for the significance tests of indirect and total effects. Although we followed their guidelines, we used bootstrapping methods appropriate for multilevel models (i.e., using STATA "xtmixed" and "bootstrap" command together; see Carpenter, Goldstein, & Rasbash, 1999; Krull, & MacKinnon, 2001; Poi, 2004), rather than Edwards and Lambert's (2007) SPSS-based bootstrapping methods that were not developed for multilevel models (see Liu, Zhang, & Wang, 2012 for more information). Differences in the effects for high and low work group identification show that both the first stage of the indirect effect (task performance— envy; $.08 - .26 = -.18$, $p < .10$) and the second stage of the indirect effect (envy—victimization; $.10 - .32 = -.22$, $p < .10$) were weaker for high work group identification. These differences resulted in a significantly weaker indirect effect for high work group identification (difference = $-.08$, $p < .05$). Thus, the total effect (the sum of direct and indirect effects) was also weaker for high work group identification (difference = $-.08$, $p < .05$). Figure 2 illustrates differences in simple slopes for high and low work group identification in predicting

envy (first stage) and victimization (second stage). Figure 2 shows that, for the first stage of the indirect effect, the relationship between task performance and envy was steeper for low work group identification; for the second stage of the indirect effect, the relationship between envy and victimization was steeper for low work group identification. A similar pattern (i.e., the buffering role of work group identification) held for the indirect and total effects. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

General Discussion

A key contribution of this study is developing and testing theoretical and empirical propositions explaining why and under what circumstances high performers experience victimization. Although anecdotal evidence implies that high performers may be prone to victimization because of envy, we have a dearth of theoretical and empirical evidence testing whether envy serves as a key mechanism. Integrating the disconnected theory and research on victim precipitation and social comparison, we proposed and found envy to be an intervening mechanism of victimization of high performers. Social comparison theory suggests that people evaluate their ability or performance through comparison with other people (Festinger, 1954). Although social comparison may build positive self-evaluation and professional identity when employees compare favorably with their coworkers, it may also destroy their self-evaluation and professional identity when they compare unfavorably with their coworkers (see Hogg, 2000). In the latter case, envy arises and leads to harming behaviors against envied targets such as high performers to reduce or remove their advantages (see Smith & Kim, 2007). Although envy may result in positive organizational outcomes including higher task performance in some cases, our results suggest envy may also result in deleterious organizational outcomes such as victimization against envied coworkers (see Tai, Narayanan, & McAllister, 2012).

This study also introduces work group identification as a boundary condition of the envy mechanism and the victimization of high performers. Integrating identity theory with the social-comparison-induced victim precipitation model, we proposed and found that work group identification tempers the victimization of high performers by reducing envy. Brewer and Gardner (1996) theorized that group identification alters social comparison processes and outcomes (e.g., basis of self-evaluation, frame of reference, and basic social motivation) and confirmed this argument in experimental settings (see also Brewer & Weber, 1994; Gardner et al., 2002). Our finding suggests that these findings generalize to the workplace victimization literature; work group identification is an important situational buffer of high performer victimization in the workplace. Broadly speaking, this finding is also consistent with multilevel theory which suggests organizations are inherently multilevel structures and work groups may be the most direct contextual factors that shape individual-level phenomena (see Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Hackman, 1992; Johns, 2006; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Mowday & Sutton, 1993). Furthermore, this study suggests promising avenues for future research that could help us better understand the critical role that social context plays on the interpersonal relationship between high performers and fellow coworkers in the workplace.

Finally, we found the relationship between task performance and victimization in the United States and South Korea. The
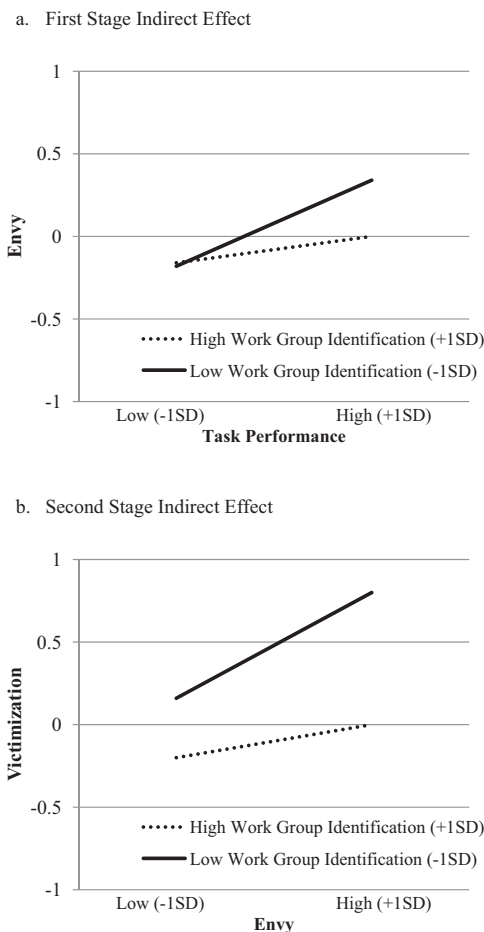

Figure 2. Moderated indirect effect of task performance on victimization (via envy) at low and high levels of work group identification. a. First stage indirect effect. b. Second stage indirect effect.

Korean culture is considered to be high in collectivism and interdependence, but the U.S. culture is considered to be high in individualism and independence (Hofstede, 1991), which may differentially influence social comparison driven instigation processes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; White & Lehman, 2005). One advantage of this study is that it provides preliminary evidence that the victimization of high-performing employees may generalize across cultures by showing consistent patterns in collectivist and individualistic cultures, thereby answering calls in the workplace victimization literature for more cross-cultural studies (see Aquino & Thau, 2009). However, we must be cautious in inferring too much from our results because the mediated-moderation model was confirmed only in the Korean sample, which is known for its collective culture. In an individualistic culture, the moderating role of work group identification may not mitigate the link between high performance and victimization. Thus, future studies that constructively replicate these results in other cultural, industrial, organizational, and team contexts will be necessary.

Practical Implications

Workplace victimization creates costs to individuals, organizations, and societies worldwide. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), cost estimates of workplace victimization range from $3 billion to $35.4 billion in a year (Hoel, Sparks, & Cooper, 2001). Although it is difficult and sometimes unnecessary to eliminate social comparison among work group members altogether (see Goodman, 1977), high performers may mitigate the negative outcomes of social comparison by avoiding the spotlight, downplaying accomplishments or behaving in a humble manner in their interactions with their coworkers. Indeed, such behaviors might reduce the victimization experienced (see Kim & Glomb, 2010, on the role of communion and agency traits), and humility has been identified as an important trait of high-performing leaders and employees (Collins, 2001; Lee & Ashton, 2012).

Beyond these personal tactics of preventing victimization, this study suggests that managers can reduce the likelihood of envy and consequent victimization of high performers by promoting work group identification. To increase group identity, managers can provide experiences that put the focus on the team such as team-building training sessions, frequent social gatherings, and fostering friendly rivalries with other teams. Considering work group identification makes study findings more accessible to practitioners (Bamberger, 2008) who might prefer context-based (e.g., enhancing work group identification) over person-based interventions (e.g., personality test for selection) in reducing the victimization of high performers.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has limitations. First, this study used single-item network-based measures to assess envy. Although using multi-item questions is desirable, in social network surveys it may cause extreme fatigue and low response rates. As such, social network researchers, having faced this dilemma, have widely used single-item measures to assess networks (e.g., Klein, Lim, Saltz, & Mayer, 2004; for review, see Kilduff & Brass, 2010). Furthermore, although network-based measures are single-item, they are also multisource ratings. Performance feedback literature has found

that multisource ratings capture theoretical constructs above and beyond the single-source ratings (e.g., Oh & Berry, 2009). Thus, being based on multisource ratings alleviates concerns of using single-item network measures.

Second, there was a tradeoff between high within-group response rate (98%) and low total response rate (23%). Because an envy variable based on network methods requires high response rates, we excluded work groups with less than 80% participation at Time 1 in our Time 2 survey administration. Although this approach contributed to the formation of robust group-level variables, it decreased the total response rate compared with other studies (e.g., average response rate in top-tier journals = 52.7%; Baruch & Holtom, 2008). To reduce this concern, we compared the final sample to the sample with insufficient response rates and found no significant differences between these two samples. As such, a low total response rate does not necessarily invalidate our study results (see Newman, 2009).

There are several avenues for extending this research. First, one might examine personality traits of high-performing victims. For example, individual difference variables including agency and communion (Wiggins, 1991), core self-evaluations (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002), or psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007) may serve as boundary conditions of the performance trajectory of high-performing victims. It may also be the case that envy may produce positive outcomes for some individuals such as those with high core self-evaluations by promoting challenge tendencies (Tai et al., 2012).

Next, research could examine team interdependence and human resources practices, such as compensation practices, as boundary conditions of the high-performing victim phenomenon. In highly interdependent teams, the victimized high performers may be unable to sustain their high levels of motivation and performance over time because other team members do not provide needed support. However, these negative interpersonal dynamics might be nullified by features of the group context such as high levels of group identification, group-based pay, or supportive leadership. For example, group-based pay may promote work group identification and mitigate the victimization of high performers in interdependent teams. Future studies might also carefully analyze the dyadic relationship between two actors and their relative performance to one another rather than performance relative to the work group.

Finally, future research might probe the possibility of different types of victimization toward different types of employees. Although our focus on upward comparisons is reasonable given that people generally have an upward comparison tendency in the case of abilities and performance compared to other areas such as health threats like cancer and chronic pain where downward comparisons are more common (for review, see Buunk & Gibbons, 2007), research could consider how downward social comparisons might be related to victimization. Research has suggested group members that compare unfavorably—low performers—are likely to be victimized as well (Jensen et al., 2013). Recent work by Jensen et al. (2013) suggested an intriguing notion that high performers may be more likely to be targets of covert victimization, whereas low performers are more likely to be targets of overt victimization. Our data showed high task performance was positively related to both indirect ($r = .13$ in Study 1 and $r = .16$ in Study 2) and direct victimization ($r = .06$ in Study 1, $r = .10$ in Study 2). This may

be because most employees were average and high performers in our data (only 4% [Study 2] and 7% [Study 1] of employees were categorized as low or very low performer) or because of the relatively high correlations between indirect and direct forms of victimization ($r = .67$ in Study 1 and $r = .45$ in Study 2, compared with $-.37$ in Jensen et al., 2013). The lack of differential effects may be because, as Smith and Kim (2007) suggested, envy is a "call to action" (p. 53) prompting a broad range of negative outcomes including conflict, aggression, and even malicious crime (e.g., murder). In our data, results were consistent when using direct and indirect victimization separately (e.g., envy to indirect and envy to direct victimization correlations $= .20$ and $.27$, $p <$ .01 in Study 2). Future research might extend this work and examine whether envy is more strongly related to different forms of victimization (see Duffy et al., 2008). Future work might also examine the possibility of reverse causality such that victimization may lead to high performance because low performing victims may want to show their capability to their coworkers and supervisors.

In conclusion, this study makes a contribution to the investigation of the mechanisms and work group context in the victimization of high performers. The results highlight social comparison driven envy in predicting the victimization of high performers and the role that work group identification play in this relationship. Given these findings, future research on workplace victimization using a multilevel perspective is necessary.

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Appendix

Table A1
Study 2 Sample Characteristics

Variable	Organization		
	Government	Advertising Agency 1	Advertising Agency 2
Total number of employees/groups	902/178	21/5	34/10
Total number of participants/groups	167/53	21/5	29/9
Individual/group response rates	19/30%	100/100%	85/90%
Gender (female proportion)	47%	43%	66%
M organizational tenure (year)	12.20	2.57	2.55
M group tenure (years)	1.95	2.14	2.31
M age (years)	41	30	28
M education	2.6	2.8	2.5

Note. Education (1 = high school, 2 = 2-year college, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = master's or doctorate degree).