DIFFERENT BUT EQUAL? A DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS OF VARIABILITY IN ADOLESCENTS’ UNDERSTANDINGS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Coming of age in an increasingly diverse social world, contemporary youth must make sense of the complexities of social differences and the disparities that exist between privileged and marginalized groups. This mixed methods study had two main objectives: (1) to examine adolescents’ understandings of social justice through their social awareness and perspective taking in the areas of racism, sexism, and classism; and (2) to assess whether these understandings varied as a function of cognitive (critical thinking, moral judgment) and affective (empathy) skills. Ninety-eight adolescents in Grades 9 and 12, evenly divided by sex, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, completed a questionnaire measuring their awareness of social (in)justice in society at large and also participated in a semi-structured interview designed to assess their perspective-taking in hypothetical peer conflicts depicting these problems. Results showed that adolescents were moderately aware of social injustice overall, demonstrating greatest awareness of classism and least awareness of sexism. Qualitative analyses of interview responses revealed five levels of perspective taking, signifying increasingly mature interpretations of group differences. On average, participants assumed a ‘nominal’ perspective that was naïve to social disparities and emphasized concerns about ‘equality’ over ‘equity’. 
Perspective taking was most sophisticated in the area of racism and least regarding sexism. Variability was also observed across grade, social location, and cognitive and affective skills. As expected, older adolescents demonstrated more mature understandings of social justice than younger adolescents. Furthermore, age-related differences were larger among adolescents attending higher SES schools. Minority youth showed greater awareness of racism than majority participants. Females demonstrated more mature understandings of sexism than males, and adolescents attending higher SES schools showed more mature understandings of classism than their lower SES counterparts. In addition, controlling for the effects of grade moral judgment predicted both social awareness and perspective taking, having the greatest effect in the area of classism and weakest in the area of sexism. Similarly, adolescents’ empathy levels predicted perspective taking in the area of sexism. These findings underline the importance of fostering adolescents’ understandings of social justice for the development of attitudes and behaviours that promote equity among all members of society.
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INTRODUCTION

“I walk into a world that has been conditioned to accept my appearance and speech as the default. I see white male faces on television and in Congress, white bodies in advertisements and films, white voices on the radio and white males in positions of power on issues that directly affect me... I have never been harassed by the police or felt nervous around them, for that matter. I have never been followed around in stores, asked where I’m really from or informed that my skin color or gender limit my abilities... I can go to sleep without the fear that most of the world believes I was not born to succeed in it.”

— Charles Clymer, Mic.com, May 2014

The expression “Check your privilege” has become popular in academic circles and on social media in recent years. Generally speaking, it is used as a way to remind individuals engaged in political discourse that the social location into which we are born (i.e., race, sex, class, sexual orientation, etc.) may be accompanied by inherent privileges that are not shared by marginalized social groups and that one must reflect on these advantages while considering the circumstances of those naturally less fortunate. Some, however, have fervently rejected the saying—perhaps none more notoriously than a 20-year-old White male freshman at Princeton University, whose essay published in TIME Magazine (May, 2014) sparked widespread controversy. In his commentary, Tal Fortgang denied that he receives any natural societal advantage due to his gender, skin color and upper class family status. He rebuked those peers telling him to ‘check his privilege’, saying “I...condemn them for diminishing everything I have personally accomplished, all the hard work I have done in my life, and for ascribing all the fruit I reap not to the seeds I sow but to some invisible patron saint of white maleness who places it out for me before I even arrive”. Furthermore, he stated that his true ‘privilege’ was a resilient family history, where his grandparents were able to overcome the persecution of the Holocaust, find success in the United States, and subsequently espouse values of education and hard work to their children and grandchildren. Critics labeled Fortgang as ignorant to the opportunities that
have been afforded to him by his social characteristics and, in doing so, dismissing the challenges and inequities faced by those simply belonging to more marginalized social groups. As one detractor put it, “No one is saying Fortgang did not sow seeds, but checking his privilege is just acknowledging that the ground he tilled was more fertile than the ground others tilled (Payton, 2014).”

This debate is noteworthy to contemporary developmental researchers for two main reasons. First, it is a sign of a North American society that has become increasingly pluralistic and heterogeneous in recent decades. Contemporary youth must come of age in a complex social world comprised of individuals differing in race/ethnicity, sex, and socio-economic status, among many other distinguishing social characteristics. Second, it reflects an emerging cultural sensitivity towards issues of social justice (i.e., racism, sexism, classism) as well as vast differences in opinion about inequity and inequality between advantaged and disadvantaged societal groups. One might wonder: what about Fortgang’s experiences or upbringing contributed to his point of view and how do they differ from his detractors? More generally, why are some more attuned to social injustice and aware of important social differences —i.e., more likely to “check their privilege”— in this day and age, while others seemingly lack such a sensitivity?

From a developmental standpoint, growing up in diverse environments appears to assist many adolescents in their interactions with others who have different social backgrounds via increased opportunities for intergroup relations and fostering prosocial attitudes that endorse equity and equality (e.g., Ruck, Park, Killen, & Crystal, 2011, Killen & Cooley, 2014). For others, however, experience with dissimilar others can lead to conduct that perpetuates social injustice, including stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Aboud & Brown, 2013). Therefore, gaining greater insight into how adolescents understand social justice and social
differences becomes particularly interesting and relevant as our society becomes increasingly diverse well into the 21st century.

Recent literature on social development has argued for studying adolescent cognition in contexts of social justice (see Killen & Smetana, 2010 for a review). Social justice encompasses a variety of characterizations but generally emphasizes the equality and fair treatment of all persons in a given society regardless of their differing social group membership (Moshman, 2008). Adams, Bell and Griffin (2007) affirmed that social justice requires the “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” and advocates “a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (p. 1)”. Problems of social justice, including racism, sexism, and classism, threaten intergroup relations among diverse youth populations as they emphasize group differences in societal power, privilege and vulnerability.

It is during adolescence when youth initiate the critical developmental task of identity formation – the process by which past experiences and attributes are integrated to establish a sense of personal continuity and individuality (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2004). During identity formation, adolescents’ social characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity, sex, class) take on new personal meaning, and youth acquire a personal set of beliefs, values, and ideologies that will shape social attitudes and determine moral behaviour (Quintana, 2010). Furthermore, adolescence is a period when peer groups emerge as a primary influence on how individuals perceive the social world around them. For example, peer relationships, specifically intergroup friendships, are crucial for reducing prejudices and discrimination (Killen & Cooley, 2014). The ways that adolescents understand and respond to problems of social justice depends on their ability to identify and reconcile dissimilar beliefs, practices and experiences of those belonging to other social groups. Adolescents who have not acquired the appropriate social-cognitive tools...
to resolve their social differences are at a greater risk of disseminating thoughts and behaviours that promote or sustain inequality (Killen, Rutland, & Ruck, 2011).

The first objective of the present study was to examine two aspects of adolescents’ understandings of problems of social justice that are critical to shaping their beliefs and attitudes about social difference: (a) a general awareness of problems of social justice in society at large, and (b) social perspective taking—the ability to assume and coordinate the perspectives of others—in contexts where problems of social justice exist. A fundamental aspect of adolescents’ comprehensions of social justice is the degree to which they are sensitive to the broad existence of social injustice. How cognizant are adolescents in pluralistic modern societies of the various inequities and inequalities that remain between social groups? Youth who are more likely to see the social world through a lens of privilege and power might be less likely to recognize the prevalence of injustice in more vulnerable social groups. Moreover, do adolescents belonging to groups with less prestige, status, and social capital, and who are more likely to be victims of inequity, regard inequity as problematic and how committed are they to tenets of social justice?

A potential consequence of being raised in a North American society that promotes diversity is that concerns for equality among social groups may replace or overpower concerns for equity. That is, by being taught that one’s social characteristics shouldn’t matter, some Canadian youth may be less aware of the social inequity that endures today. One might presume that adolescents with a greater awareness of social justice problems are more likely to bring such a consciousness to their social interactions and reason about group differences in more sophisticated ways compared to those who are less aware. Adolescents with greater social justice awareness may be more likely to disseminate and defend principles of social justice. Thus, the degree to which adolescents are aware of problems of social justice offers valuable insights into their understanding of social justice themes. To my knowledge, adolescents’ awareness of
problems of social justice remains largely unexplored in the psychological literature.

In addition to studying adolescents’ awareness of problems of social justice, it is also important to examine the complexity of their perceptions of social justice. The advanced social cognitive skills that adolescents utilize in their interactions are critical in shaping their interpretations of social differences (e.g., Smetana & Villalobos, 2009). Social perspective taking—the uniquely human ability to identify, assume, and coordinate multiple points of view (Selman, 1980)—is particularly important for helping adolescents acquire mature understandings of social justice. Often described as “stepping into someone else’s shoes”, social perspective taking is a cognitive skill requiring a high level of social awareness, where one can simultaneously remove oneself from his or her own beliefs, values, opinions, and principles while synchronizing those of others (Selman, 1980). Adolescents must have the necessary perspective taking capacities in order to grasp critical social group differences in contexts of social justice. For example, for a White adolescent to accurately assume the point of a view of a Black adolescent in contexts of racism, he or she must be aware of unique factors contributing to Black youth’s perspective, such as different beliefs about the social world, previous experiences of prejudice and experience, group status and identity, as well as the societal and historical contexts that underlie perceptions of inequity and injustice. Youth who are able to employ more advanced social perspective taking skills are more likely to possess attitudes that support social diversity and to engage in behaviours that endorse justice, while adolescents who struggle to assume the points of view of others are at risk of internalizing stereotypes, prejudices and false heuristics about those from opposing social groups (Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Quintana, 2010).

The second objective of this study was to examine cognitive and affective factors that may account for variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice. Some theorists might argue that adolescents with a stronger awareness and more sophisticated social perspective
taking ability in contexts of social justice may generally have more sophisticated cognitive skills (Moshman, 2011), including advanced critical thinking skills (Stanovich, West, & Toplak, 2011) and sophisticated moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1981; 1984; Turiel, 2008). Karcher and Fischer (2004) established that intergroup understanding becomes more complex throughout adolescence as youth acquire the ability to assimilate various abstract attitudes, beliefs and feelings about specific social groups. An alternative theoretical stance suggests that adolescents’ understandings of social justice may be explained by differences in affective factors, particularly their emotional response to the situation (e.g., Davis & Maitner, 2009; Hoffman, 2008). Studies have shown that social perspective taking tends to increase feelings of sympathy, compassion, and concern for others’ well being, which, in turn, elicits out-group helping (e.g., Chambers & Davis, 2012). Therefore, adolescents who are more emotionally affected by social inequity and experience higher levels of empathy when adopting the points of view of victims of social injustice might be more cognizant of problems of social justice and capable of more mature social perspective taking in such contexts. Similarly, less-sensitive adolescents may not be as aware of the ubiquity of social inequity as well as less compelled to engage in social perspective taking in its presence. Finally, other scholars (e.g., Gibbs, 2013) might posit that a combination of both cognitive and affective influences account for differences in adolescents’ understanding of social justice.

In sum, the present research had two main objectives. First, it examined two critical aspects of adolescents’ understandings of social justice: their awareness of the prevalence of problems of social justice (i.e., racism, sexism, and classism) in contemporary society and their understandings of these problems as revealed in their social perspective taking ability in such contexts. Second, it explored potential cognitive (i.e., critical thinking, moral judgment) and affective (i.e., empathy) variables that may explain individual differences in adolescents’ understandings of social justice.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review is divided into two sections corresponding to the two objectives of the study. I will begin with an overview of the theoretical and empirical bases for examining adolescents’ understandings of social justice through their (a) awareness of social justice problems and (b) social perspective taking in contexts of social justice. The second section will discuss proposed underlying cognitive and affective factors relevant to individual differences in adolescents’ understandings of social justice.

I: Adolescents’ Understandings of Social Justice: Social Awareness and Perspective Taking

Awareness of Problems of Social Justice

A revealing aspect of adolescents’ interpretations of social justice is their awareness of problems of social justice in contemporary society. Are modern youth conscious of the disparities that exist between more and less vulnerable social groups? Today’s younger generations are far removed from the height of civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s. In Canada, multiculturalism has long been entrenched into the national identity and enforced through social policy. On one hand, being raised in such a climate may have weakened adolescents’ overall sensitivity to problems of social justice. Although youth may express attitudes that support diversity and equality (e.g., Killen & Cooley, 2014), they may also be naïve to the differences that remain between social groups (e.g., “Racism is not really a problem anymore”; “Men and women are equal these days”). Alternatively, awareness of social justice may become stronger as social group membership assumes new personal significance in adolescence (Quintana, 2010). Moreover, adolescents’ awareness of problems of social justice
may affect their interactions and relationships, particularly with those belonging to social groups different from their own.

While studies dedicated to identifying children’s and adolescents’ awareness of social justice problems appear to be virtually non-existent, theory and research intersecting the fields of developmental psychology, social psychology and sociology can provide valuable insight into how youth become aware and respond to inequity and inequality. Four distinct areas of literature, potentially related to adolescents’ awareness of social justice at different ecological levels, will now be reviewed. Advising our understanding of the development of awareness of social justice on a societal and cultural level is the existing literature on (a) social stratification and (b) the propagation of “colourblind” ideology and socialization. In addition, studies on adolescents’ (c) social dominance orientation and (d) their personal interest and commitment to social justice highlight individual attributes and relational processes that might help determine the degree to which they are aware of problems of social justice.

**Social Stratification Theory: Conflict vs. Functional Models.**

First, research in the area of adolescents’ awareness of social justice may be informed by social stratification theory, which refers to the study of the processes by which societies become hierarchically organized according to different categories (e.g., race, sex, class) (Doob, 2013). Two theoretical models of social stratification have potential implications for adolescents’ awareness of social justice: *conflict* and *functional* (See Leahy, 2003). The conflict model (Marx, 1966; Weber, 1946) argues that beliefs and attitudes about stratification depend on the social groups to which individuals belong. Those who experience greater conflict or displacement within the stratification system are thought to be more aware of the flaws or inequities that result from the existing structure (Leahy, 2003). Subsequently, people of different races/ethnicities, sexes, and socioeconomic classes would have diverging concepts of stratification, which may
reflect differences in social justice awareness. According to this model, those who identify as racial/ethnic minority, female, and working class would be more conscious of social inequity than those who are White, male, and with higher socioeconomic backgrounds, as they are more likely to be marginalized by society. From a developmental standpoint, increased socialization throughout adolescence may lead to stronger affiliations to one’s social groups, thereby resulting in greater differences in awareness of social justice (Leahy, 2003). In contrast with conflict theory, the functional model (Parsons, 1960) argues that stratification is a necessary aspect of socialization and that stratification concepts are universally shared. It proposes that all children and adolescents gradually internalize the rules and ideologies of the prevailing group resulting in stronger adherence to the stratification hierarchy with age (Leahy, 2003). Thus, proponents of functional theory might postulate that adolescents’ awareness of social justice may be moderated by beliefs and attitudes reflecting social stability and increased justification of the status quo.

Research on children and adolescents’ understandings of class differences offers support for the functional model. Adolescents have been shown to be more likely to legitimize economic inequality by using equity-related characteristics such as job status, intelligence, education, and effort instead of sociocentric factors (e.g., social structure, life chances) and offered fatalistic attributions (e.g., “human nature”) in justifying wealth and poverty — regardless of social class (Flanagan, Ingram, Gallay, & Gallay, 1997; Leahy, 1981; 1983; Sigelman, 2012). If adolescents perceive economic inequality as a defensible and fair outcome, they may be less aware of classism as it exists in modern society. Furthermore, these results imply that adolescents’ awareness of economic inequality would be largely consistent across age, race, sex, and social class. That being said, there has been some empirical support for conflict theory in the aforementioned research as both Black and less affluent adolescents have been found to show greater concern for the poor and were more willing to challenge the existing economic system
(Leahy, 1981; 1983). Other research has shown that adolescents’ socioeconomic status influenced adolescents’ blame attributions about poverty; specifically, there was a greater tendency among more-affluent adolescents to hold the poor individually responsible for their circumstances compared to their less-affluent counterparts (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Furnham, 1982). Flanagan and colleagues (2003) found that working-class youth in countries where individualism has long been emphasized (e.g., U.S.A. Australia) were more likely to attribute economic prosperity to individual merit compared to working-class adolescents from societies in transition to market economies (e.g., Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia).

**Colourblind Ideology.**

Also on a sociocultural level, adolescents’ awareness of social injustice may also be informed by studies on colourblind ideology and socialization, which is a subject that has received significant scholarly attention in recent years. As society has become more and more sensitive to issues of racial diversity over the past several decades, “colourblindness” has become a central philosophical approach to dealing with race and racism (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). Essentially, individuals who adopt a colourblind ideology reject race as a social construct of any significance and argue that by collectively disregarding race as a society, racial discrimination and inequality can be effectively reduced or eliminated (Schofield, 2007). Critics have argued that colourblind ideology promotes ignorance to important social group differences (i.e., unique cultures, histories, values, and experiences of minority groups) and encourages individuals to forget or ignore the continued prevalence of discrimination and inequality (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2015; Schofield, 2007). Importantly, research has shown that there are differences among racial groups in the support and promotion of colourblindness. Ryan and colleagues (2007) found that White Americans were more likely to endorse colourblind ideology, while Black Americans tended to support multicultural ideologies that embraced racial and ethnic group differences, and
contended that understanding and appreciating differences are necessary in order to attain justice and equality. Among White individuals, endorsement of colourblindness was also associated with stronger stereotypes and greater ethnocentrism (Ryan et al., 2007).

Developmental studies have also demonstrated that White American children typically adopt a colourblind approach to handling issues of race (Apfelbaum, et al., 2008; Pahlke, Bigler, & Suizzo, 2012). In a study of White American preschool children and their mothers, Pahlke et al. (2012) showed that mothers employed colourblind socialization strategies; they generally avoided discussions of race with their children and tended to ignore children’s statements concerning intergroup conflict. These findings indicate that White adolescents, having been socialized to accept colourblind approaches, may be less aware of the prevalence of racism than adolescents belonging to a racial/ethnic minority group. Similar socialization processes may underlie adolescents’ developing conceptions of sex and socioeconomic class, potentially influencing their awareness of sexism and classism.

While the aforementioned literature gives insight into adolescents’ awareness of problems of social justice from a sociocultural perspective, research on adolescents’ social dominance orientation as well as their interest and commitments towards social justice inform our understanding on an individual or relational level.

**Social Dominance Orientation.**

Social dominance orientation refers to the degree to which individuals endorse group-based social hierarchies and inequality among social groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 2012). People with a higher social dominance orientation tend to hold prejudicial attitudes that encourage and proliferate social injustice. For example, social dominance orientation among adult populations has been shown to be positively associated with prejudice against Blacks (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Whitley, 1999), derogated social groups (Duckitt & Sibley, 2006)
and women (Pratto et al., 1994). Individuals with greater social dominance orientation are also less likely to support ideologies and practices that would diminish social stratification (e.g., social welfare, racial policies and women’s rights) and are more likely to endorse policies that enhance inequality (Pratto et al., 1994). Studies involving adolescents (e.g., Mayeux, 2014; Poteat & Anderson, 2012; Cross & Fletcher, 2011) have indicated that social dominance orientation forms by mid to later adolescence, and is often associated with greater social status and popularity. Cross and Fletcher (2011) found that male adolescents have a higher social dominance orientation than females, and that social dominance orientation increased as a function of males’ (but not females’) peer crowd affiliations. Specifically, male adolescents who identified as belonging to ‘high status’ peer groups (i.e., jocks) had stronger social dominance orientations than those associated with ‘low status’ crowds (i.e., nerds). Another study by Mayeux (2014) showed that female adolescents who scored high on both social dominance orientation and popularity also attained the highest levels of peer-rated relational aggression. These findings suggest that social dominance-orientated adolescents profit most from existing social hierarchal structures and are therefore more motivated to uphold them (Cross & Fletcher, 2011). Accordingly, these youth may be less willing or able to recognize or appreciate social injustice at a broader societal scale.

**Social Justice Interest and Commitment.**

Another area that enlightens our comprehension of adolescents’ awareness of social injustice from an individual/relational standpoint are studies that have examined individual differences in youth’s personal interest and commitment to social justice (Miller et al., 2009; Todd, McConnell, & Suffrin, 2014; Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012). One might hypothesize that adolescents with greater interest and dedication towards the implementation of social justice might be more sensitive to the existence of inequity. Torres-Harding et al. (2012) found that college students’
endorsement of social justice beliefs, values and goals as well as intentions to engage in social action, such as political and social activism, or other social justice-related activities directly predicted attitudes that sanctioned subtle forms of racism and sexism. That is, those with greater social justice interest and commitment were less likely to deny the existence of racial discrimination against Black Americans and gender inequalities and were also not as likely to blame or resent Black Americans and women for their disadvantages. The authors concluded that a personal dedication towards social justice enhances the awareness of social inequity and inequality, and the belief that vulnerable social groups are subject to a systematic and institutional oppression by a privileged segment of society (Torres-Harding et. al, 2012). Another recent study of White Christian college students found that interest and commitment towards social justice was positively associated with a willingness to confront their white privilege, while social justice interest was negatively associated with religious conservatism (Todd et al., 2014).

Thus, by late adolescence and early adulthood, it appears that individuals have adopted subjective attitudes and dispositions about issues of social justice, which may reflect the degree to which they are aware of disparities among societal groups. Due to increased socialization and advanced social-cognitive development (i.e., Karcher & Fischer, 2004; Quintana, 1994; Rubenstein, 2012), older adolescents may demonstrate greater awareness of problems of social justice than younger adolescents. Nevertheless, it remains largely unclear when adolescents’ beliefs about and commitments to social justice become consolidated as well as how they develop over time.

**Social Perspective Taking in Contexts of Social Justice**

A second fundamental aspect contributing to adolescents’ understandings of social justice is their ability to engage in social perspective taking—the capacity to assume and consider the points of views of others. Social perspective taking is a skill that entails the constant coordination
of multiple perspectives; children and adolescents are continuously required to consider and evaluate how various viewpoints are related to each other and integrate them with their own. This nonstop ‘balancing act’ of contrasting perspectives largely shapes our social understanding. Consequently, the development of social perspective taking is highly reflective of adolescents’ maturing thoughts and feelings about the social world and their role within it. Selman (1980, 2003) constructed a structural five-stage model that outlines the development of social perspective taking from early childhood through adolescence. It stresses adolescence as a period where interpretations of individuals, relations, and peer groups become increasingly sophisticated, indicating higher advances in social perspective taking.

The onset of adolescence marks the transition to Level 3 social perspective taking ability in Selman’s model, where children become able to step outside their own viewpoints and simultaneously observe themselves and others from a genuinely “third person” perspective. Consequently, they acquire the capacity to assume a joint perspective across a group of individuals. Early adolescents’ perceptions of groups are immature and rigid; they are seen as single entities consisting of persons united by homogeneous experiences, beliefs, values, and interests. Quintana (1994) extended Selman’s original perspective taking model to correspond to the development of reasoning about race and ethnicity. With the development of Selman’s Level 3 perspective taking ability, early adolescents typically develop an awareness of the subjective and contextual factors that distinguish groups, including background experiences related to race/ethnicity, parental attitudes, and the child-rearing environment. They also begin to exhibit an understanding of racial/ethnic group consciousness or that there are certain beliefs, attitudes, and experiences that are shared by members of a specific race/ethnicity.

By mid to late adolescence, many adolescents have acquired the social perspective taking capacities that are representative of Level 4 — the most advanced level of Selman (1980)’s
model. At this point, adolescents can assume a more sophisticated third-person perspective that allows them to understand how points of view are influenced by societal and cultural roles and experiences. This capacity allows for greater flexibility and sophistication in their understandings within and between social groups. Where value was previously placed on conformity and assimilation among their own groups, older adolescents emphasize tolerance and respect for individual differences. Accompanied by Level 4 perspective taking ability, late adolescents typically develop an appreciation for ethnic diversity and a willingness to synchronize the perspectives of majority and minority groups (Quintana, 1994). Karcher and Fischer (2004) showed that adolescents’ expanding abstract reasoning skills facilitates maturation in their intergroup understanding. Thus, the development of adolescent social perspective taking appears to correspond with greater alignment to beliefs and attitudes that advocate social justice.

Recent literature in social psychology has highlighted the potential advantages of social perspective taking in situations that depict social injustice (e.g., Davis & Maitner, 2009; Todd, Galinsky, & Bodenhausen, 2012). For example, studies have shown that perspective taking encourages the formation and maintenance of social bonds by reducing stereotyping, bias, and prejudice as well as facilitating intergroup understanding (e.g., Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Shih, Wang, Trahan Bucher, & Stotzer, 2009). These studies imply that adolescents with better perspective taking are less likely to proliferate cognitions and behaviours that encourage social inequality. However, the majority of social psychological studies concerning social perspective taking and social diversity comprise adult participants and have not stressed developmental changes over time.

To my knowledge, my Masters’ thesis (Rubenstein, 2012), which laid the foundation for the present research, was the first study to examine adolescents’ social perspective taking skills in contexts of social justice. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, adolescents in Grades 9 and 12
participated in a semi-structured interview where they were presented with scenarios involving adolescents with different social characteristics in hypothetical peer interactions portraying two areas of social injustice — racism and sexism. Participants were asked questions designed to elicit their understanding of problems of social justice and social difference and their ability to interpret the scenarios from the disparate points of view of the protagonists.

In this preliminary research, qualitative analyses revealed three main levels (with two transitional levels), reflecting distinct interpretations of social group differences. Adolescents with the least sophisticated interpretations assumed what may be described as an *interpersonal* perspective; that is, they understood the conflict in the scenario solely as a matter between two peers, and their respective social groups were not a primary concern. In contrast, participants with the most sophisticated interpretations adopted a *social group* perspective; they were able to reflect about the conflict in terms of the characters’ social differences and as a clear instance of social inequity. On average, however, adolescents employed a *nominal* perspective. While these adolescents recognized the saliency of race and sex in the two scenarios, they were also naïve about the inequalities that historically have existed and remain between members of more and less vulnerable social groups. The results of this preliminary research showed that adolescents’ social perspective taking ability in contexts of social justice varied widely and, in keeping with Selman (1980) and Quintana (1994), was significantly related to age. However, an important question that remains unclear is what else might be contributing to individual differences in adolescent social perspective taking in these contexts. Specifically, beyond age, what factors help to distinguish adolescents who adopt a perspective that reflects a mature understanding of problems of social justice from those who do not?
Grade (Age) and Social Location

Particularly relevant to individual differences in both adolescents’ awareness of problems of social justice and their social perspective taking in these contexts is their grade (age) as well as the distinguishing attributes that form their ‘social locations’. Adolescents’ social location refers to the characteristics that collectively shape one’s societal vantage point (e.g., sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), among others) and form the basis for their beliefs about and interpretations of the social world. As indicated by the previous overview of theories of social stratification, the influence of social location on adolescents’ understandings of social justice, in terms of their social awareness and perspective taking, is uncertain. Unquestionably, sex and race/ethnicity are fundamental to one’s social location. Consistent with the conflict theory of social stratification, female adolescents as well as those who belong to a racial/ethnic minority group are more likely to be subjected to or victimized by social inequity and therefore may perceive problems of social justice differently from members of more privileged social groups. Studies have shown that female and ethnic minority adolescents evaluate peer exclusion based on race and sex more harshly and utilized complex forms of reasoning than their ethnic-majority and male counterparts (Horn, 2003; Killen & Stangor, 2001; Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin & Stangor, 2002).

While sex and race/ethnicity have figured prominently in the existing social justice literature (Killen & Smetana, 2010), social class or socioeconomic status is a less cited yet crucial aspect of adolescents’ social locations that may substantially influence their understandings of social justice. Similar to females and racial/ethnic minorities, adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may feel marginalized in a society that promotes capitalism and materialism. How children and adolescents perceive the division of society according to wealth has attracted recent scholarly attention. For example, Sigelman (2012) showed that a developmental shift occurs in
children’s explanations of wealth and poverty at around the age of 10 from an emphasis on positive and negative outcomes (i.e., job status, education, luck) to the psychological characteristics of the individual (i.e., intelligence, motivation).

Thus, the developmental literature suggests that adolescents’ understandings of social justice varies according to social group membership; individuals who belong to more vulnerable social groups (e.g., minority, female, less-affluent) may be more aware of problems of social justice in society as well as better able to assume competing perspectives in situations that highlight social inequity, which is in keeping with conflict theory. On the other hand, proponents of functional theory might contend that social location has little relation to adolescents’ understandings of social justice given their assertion of a universal need to maintain social stability and existing hierarchical structures. In support of this argument, Selman and colleagues did not report significant group differences in social perspective taking ability throughout development (Guracharri & Selman, 1982; 1984; Quintana, 1994; Selman, 1980; 2003). In addition, my master’s research (Rubenstein, 2012) found no differences in social perspective taking between male and female adolescents.

**Social Justice Area: Racism, Sexism, and Classism**

The present study examined adolescents’ understandings of problems of social justice across three specific areas: racism, sexism, and classism. While it is common for developmental studies to emphasize one of these issues — especially racism in recent years — this study was unique in its attempt to investigate adolescents’ understandings across these three areas. Problems of racism, sexism, and classism were selected over other kinds of inequity (e.g., ageism, ableism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, etc.) for several reasons. First, sex, race/ethnicity, and social class are prominent ways that all adolescents’ make sense of their social worlds as well as their individual positions within society. Second, racism, sexism, and classism are social justice issues
that are more likely to affect a larger proportion of Canadian adolescents. Racism and sexism, in particular, remain among the most prevalent and widely scrutinized forms of social inequity in contemporary Canadian society (Association for Canadian Studies, 2013; Cool, 2010).

This study extended my Master’s research (Rubenstein, 2012), which focused exclusively on racism and sexism, to also emphasize classism—a pervasive form of inequity that is largely underrepresented in the social justice literature. According to a recent report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011), income disparity in Canada has risen faster in the past decade than all but five of 34 modernized participating countries and at a rate that is almost double that of the United States. Additionally, the American Psychological Association (2007) noted the growing body of research that appealed “for a psychology that is conscious of social class—calling for researchers, practitioners, and educators to attend more fully to the impact of socioeconomic position on psychological processes and outcomes, the subjective experiences of social class status, and psychological processes related to the social and political implications of class inequities (p. 1)”.

Integrating classism also served to enhance the study’s validity as a fair and precise assessment of adolescents’ overall understandings of social justice.

In summary, the first objective of this study was to examine variability in adolescents’ social awareness and perspective taking in contexts of social justice (1) across grade (age) and features of their social location (sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status) (2) as well as across three areas of social justice (racism, sexism, classism). I will now provide the theoretical and empirical rationale underlying the second research objective, which was to examine variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice as a function of crucial individual cognitive and affective skills.
II: Potential Predictors of Adolescents’ Understandings of Social Justice

Adolescents’ understandings of social justice are undeniably shaped by a combination of several variables, from individual attributes of one’s social location (e.g., sex, race/ethnicity, SES) to interpersonal factors (e.g., parents, peers, romantic interests), institutional influences (e.g., school, work), and much broader societal (e.g., media, political) influences. From a traditional cognitive-developmental standpoint, however, adolescence is a critical period of tremendous intellectual and emotional growth. Logically, this therefore raises the question: To what extent are these cognitive and affective aspects of development associated with variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice? The study examined three particular capacities that have long been regarded as crucial to adolescent psychological development—(a) critical thinking, (b) moral judgment, and (c) empathy. The following section will describe the existing literature on each of these constructs as they relate to the current research.

Cognitive Factors

Advancement in social-cognitive development that occurs throughout adolescence plays a crucial role in determining how youth become able to contemplate principles of social justice and related concepts in qualitatively more sophisticated ways (See Moshman, 2011). Adolescence is marked by the emergence of Piagetian and neo-Piagetian concepts of formal operations, including the capacities to think abstractly, engage in hypothetico-deductive reasoning, assume higher order logical thought and construe reality from various possibilities (e.g., Case, 1985; 1992; Fischer, 1980; Piaget, 1952). In addition, socialization processes in adolescence lead to more complex social experiences, a greater emphasis on peer relations and increased participation as a member of a larger society (Rosenberg, 1986; Smetana & Villalobos, 2009).

Two cognitive capacities that are known to influence adolescents’ social understandings but vary widely among youth populations are (a) critical thinking and (b) moral judgment. These
variables were emphasized above others for a number of reasons. Conceptually, they are integral to adolescents’ developing beliefs and attitudes towards social justice; mature comprehensions of social inequity and social group differences likely require both superior reasoning skills as well as more complex interpretations of fairness and “good” or “bad” conduct. Second, critical thinking and moral judgment can be understood as related, yet distinct, cognitive constructs. Moshman (1995, 2011) argued that rationality is fundamental to conceptualizing advances in both adolescent cognition and morality. He maintained that moral development is rationally constructed (“moral rationality”), and it is one’s rational beliefs about that which is right or wrong that have the potential to mature over time. A final reason for drawing attention to critical thinking and moral judgment in this study is their relevance to the development of adolescent social perspective taking. Several scholars consider perspective taking to be an important link between the development of rationality and morality (e.g., Gibbs, 2013; Moshman, 2011). As Moshman (2011) asserted, “to be rational is to transcend your own perspective, and to be moral, is in large part the same thing (p.170).”

**Critical Thinking.**

The capacity to think critically has been defined by philosopher Robert Ennis (1993) as “reasonable and reflective thinking concentrated on deciding what to believe or do (p.180)”. Critical thinking is widely regarded in psychology as a vital component of advanced rationality. According to Stanovich (2009), rational thought implies both accepting beliefs about the world that correspond with available evidence (epistemological rationality) and participating in appropriate goal-oriented behaviour based on those beliefs (instrumental rationality). In order to think critically, one must think rationally and vice versa. It is in adolescence when individuals begin to demonstrate advanced levels of rationality, indicated by superior logical and scientific reasoning (Kuhn, 1999), problem solving (DeLoache, Miller, Pierroutsakos, 1998), decision-
making (Holland & Klaczynski, 2009); argumentation (Felton, 2004), and planning (Galotti, 2005) skills. Several scholars have asserted that the fostering of critical thinking skills in adolescence should be a central objective of secondary schools (e.g., Keating & Sasse, 1996; Moshman, 2011).

A major focus in the critical thinking literature has been dedicated towards differentiating between cognitive abilities and individual thinking dispositions — two separate aspects of “good” thinking (e.g., Stanovich & West, 1997; 2007). As opposed to cognitive capacities, which include the various processes that underlie most psychometric measures of general intelligence (e.g., verbal reasoning, processing speed), thinking dispositions represent malleable styles of cognition that indicate distinctive tendencies in behaviour and are largely ignored by standardized IQ measures (Stanovich, 1999; 2009; Stanovich & West, 1997). Thinking dispositions are the means through which critical thinkers reason and act rationally (Stanovich, 2009). A particularly important tendency of the critical mind is to consistently and reliably think in an open-minded and flexible manner. Explicitly, critical thinkers show the propensity to appraise evidence and arguments separately from their personal beliefs, attitudes, and opinions (Stanovich & West, 1997).

It is only in adolescence when the ability to reason free of prior biases is possible with the development of more advanced forms of reasoning (Case, 1985; 1992; Fischer, 1980; Moshman, 2011; Piaget, 1952). West, Toplak and Stanovich (2008) found that the disposition to engage in actively open-minded thinking predicted the tendencies to avoid common cognitive biases and heuristics. Thus, the value of being able to employ such a cognitive style may also be analogous to having more mature understandings of social justice. Adolescents with the disposition to reason independently of prior beliefs and opinions may have more complex conceptions of issues related to social justice and social group differences, possibly leading to a greater awareness of
the prevalence of problems of social justice as well as the use of more advanced social perspective taking in contexts depicting these problems. As a result, individual differences in critical thinking may help to explain variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice.

*Moral Judgment.*

Another distinctly cognitive capacity that may help to explain adolescents’ understandings of social justice is the maturity of their moral judgment (Gibbs, 2013; Kohlberg, 1981; 1984; Piaget, 1965). Kohlberg’s (1981, 1984) theory argues that moral judgment gradually develops through six qualitatively distinct stages from childhood through adulthood. Early adolescence is typically accompanied by a shift from “Preconventional” reasoning at Stage 2 to “Conventional” reasoning at Stages 3 and 4. Contrasted with the moral judgments of younger children, who typically reason in accordance with their own personal or hedonistic interests, early adolescents’ sense of right and wrong at Stage 3 is oriented by their various social roles and the expectations of their family, friends and greater community. Typical moral judgments in early adolescence emphasize interpersonal relationships and the mutual obligations that exist between the individual and those who figure prominently in their lives.

During mid to late adolescence, the focus of moral judgments may begin to expand to include the functioning and cohesion of society at large. Moral reasoning at Stage 4 places significance on the societal and cultural rules, laws, and customs that preserve the prevailing social system. Although the full complexity of this stage of reasoning is only rarely seen in adolescents’ moral judgments, its early signs may have strong implications for their understandings of social justice. Furthermore, studies have shown that the acquisition of advanced social perspective taking abilities is a critical prerequisite for the development of moral judgment (Selman, 1976; Walker, 1980).
Recent findings about adolescents’ moral judgment in contexts of peer exclusion provide further insight about their understandings of social justice. Based on social-cognitive domain theory (Helwig, 1995; 1997; Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2008), Killen and colleagues have studied how children and adolescents integrate moral (i.e., justice, fairness, equality), social-conventional (i.e., laws, norms, rules, traditions) and personal (i.e., identity, preferences, goals) concerns in their reasoning about social exclusion (see Killen & Cooley, 2014; Killen, Mulvey, & Hitti, 2013). Studies have shown that early adolescents’ concerns for justice and fairness while reasoning about social exclusion tend to be overridden by concerns for conventional and group functioning (Horn, 2003; Killen & Stangor, 2001). Furthermore, adolescents who are more likely to be excluded based on their social attributes (European-American females, and ethnic minority adolescents) also tend to cite more moral concerns in their reasoning about exclusion compared to less-vulnerable (European-American males) adolescents (Killen et al., 2002). These findings suggest that adolescents’ social experiences influence their moral judgments about social exclusion, and perhaps subsequently their understandings of social justice. Thus, moral judgment maturity may help to account for individual differences in adolescents’ social awareness and perspective taking in contexts of social justice.

Affective Factor

Empathy.

Variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice may be associated with differences in their emotional responses to inequity. Empathy—the ability to identify and vicariously feel other individuals’ emotions—is a critical capacity that humans use to regulate their interactions with the social world (e.g., Davis, 1983; Hoffman, 2000). Adolescents experience varying degrees of compassion and empathy in response to social inequity. Those who feel more empathy towards victims of social inequality may perceive problems of social
justice differently from those who respond with less empathy. For example, youth who belong to more vulnerable social groups (and are thus more likely to be persecuted by social inequity) may experience greater levels of empathy in contexts of social justice. Some have studied empathy as a multidimensional construct with both cognitive and affective elements (Davis, 1980). For example, perspective taking (i.e. “stepping into another’s shoes”) is often regarded as an integral “cognitive” component to empathy. However, the present study will focus exclusively on “affective” or “emotional” empathy.

According to Gibbs (2013), the feelings of empathy that one experiences from assuming and coordinating the points of view of others is a critical determinant of appropriate sociomoral understanding and behaviour. Some scholars suggest that individuals who experience higher levels of affective empathy are cognitively better able to assume the perspectives of others (Davis et al., 2004; Gibbs, 2013; Hoffman, 2000). In addition, recent research in social psychology highlights empathy as a key factor in the relationship between perspective taking ability and intergroup helping (see Davis & Maitner, 2009). Studies have demonstrated that individuals are likely to experience greater levels of empathy, compassion and personal distress in response to assuming the perspectives of others under duress, which increases helping behaviour towards out-groups (e.g., Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Davis, et al., 2004). Similarly, adolescents who are more aware of problems of social justice may also feel more empathy compared to those who are less conscious of these problems.

Studies have also consistently found that females have higher levels of empathy than males throughout the lifespan (e.g., Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009; Mestre, Samper, Frias, & Tur, 2009; Van Der Graaff et al., 2014). A longitudinal study by Van der Graaff and colleagues (2014) found that empathy did not increase over the course of adolescence; however, while female empathy levels remained steady throughout, male empathy levels declined from
early to mid-adolescence (13 to 16 years) before subsequently returning to initial levels. Vander Graaff and colleagues (2014) postulated that sex differences in empathy could be explained by earlier female pubertal maturation as well as gender role expectations that might dissuade males from demonstrating emotional responsiveness. Accordingly, female adolescents may have stronger emotional responses to inequity and thereby exhibit a greater awareness of problems of social justice compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, empathy is a third factor that may help to explain the variability in adolescents’ understandings of problems of social justice.

**Research Objectives and Questions**

The present study adopted a social-cognitive framework to studying two aspects of adolescents’ understandings of social justice (see Figure 1 for a conceptual outline). Research objectives and corresponding questions were as follows:

**Objective #1: To examine adolescents’ understandings of social justice through (a) their awareness of problems of social justice in contemporary society and (b) their social perspective taking ability in peer-interaction contexts of social justice**

Specifically:

1) To what extent are adolescents aware of problems of social justice in our society?

2) Does adolescents’ social perspective taking in contexts of social justice reveal an understanding of social group differences?

3) Do social awareness and perspective taking vary across specific problems of social justice (racism, sexism, and classism)?

4) Do adolescents’ understandings of social justice vary as a function of their grade (age) and fundamental aspects of their social location (sex, race/ethnicity, and SES)?

5) Is adolescents’ social awareness related to their perspective taking in contexts of social justice?
Objective #2: To examine variability in adolescents’ understandings of problems of social justice as a function of cognitive (i.e., critical thinking, moral judgment) and affective (i.e., empathy) factors.

Specifically:

6) Do adolescents’ understandings of social justice vary as a function of the sophistication of their critical thinking, moral judgment, and/or empathy?

7) What are the models that best predict adolescents’ understandings of social justice overall and within the areas of racism, sexism, and classism?
Figure 1. Variables under investigation.
METHOD

Participant Recruitment

Data were collected as part of a larger study on adolescents’ understandings of and commitments to social justice. Participants were recruited from four public high schools in the Greater Toronto area. Each school agreed to partake in the study following ethical approval from the University of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board. The four schools were selected to represent student populations with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, based on publicly available estimates of students’ parents’ average income (Cowley & Easton, 2015), two schools comprised students from families with primarily working to lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds (for the sake of simplicity, “lower SES” henceforth) and two schools consisted of students from families with primarily higher middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds (“higher SES” henceforth). Consistent with University and Board policy, informed consent was obtained from adolescents who were 18 years of age, while parental consent was sought from those under the age of 18 (See Appendix A).

Participants

The sample included 98 (51 male and 47 female) adolescents in Grades 9 ($M = 14.79$ years, $SD = 0.35$), and 12 ($M = 18.16$ years, $SD = 0.68$). Participants self-identified as belonging to the following racial/ethnic groups: White (48.5%), South Asian (14.4%), Southeast Asian (10.3%), Eastern Asian (9.3%), Black (6.2%), Mixed/Other (4.1 %), Middle Eastern (4.1%), and Hispanic/Latin-American (3.1%). Sampling limitations necessitated that groups be collapsed into two categories indicating race/ethnicity status: majority (i.e., White) and minority. A significant portion of participants (29.9%) were born outside Canada; 12.2% had lived in Canada for less than half of their lives. All participants reported that they were fluent in English. Slightly more than half of participants (53.1%) attended lower SES schools, while 46.9% of participants
attended higher SES schools. Grade 12 participants were compensated for their contribution with volunteer hours, as part of their graduation requirements. See Table 1 for a demographic breakdown of participants according to higher and lower SES schools.

**Measures**

The research incorporated a mixed methods design, including the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In recent decades, mixed methods designs have gained momentum among researchers in the social sciences because they enrich findings in ways that are not possible using only one kind of data and expand the breadth of analysis (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008). All measures can be found in the appendices.

### Demographic Questionnaire.

A demographic questionnaire asked participants to indicate their grade, age, sex, race/ethnicity, country of birth, language spoken at home, as well as parent/caregivers’ education, work status and type of employment. In addition, respondents were asked to reveal their involvement in religious activities, degree of contact with members of different social groups, and their academic standing compared to that of their peers (See Appendix B).

### Adolescents’ Understandings of Social Justice.

**Awareness of Problems of Social Justice.** The *Beliefs About the Social World* inventory was developed for the purposes of this research. It is an 18-item, paper and pencil measure that asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements reflecting beliefs about the prevalence of problems of social justice in contemporary society (See Appendix C). The measure contains three five-item subscales (and three “dummy” items), with each evaluating the awareness of a familiar form of social injustice in contemporary society: (1)
Table 1.
Demographics by Higher and Lower SES Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower (N = 52)</th>
<th>Higher (N = 46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>n = 24</td>
<td>n = 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>n = 13</td>
<td>n = 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>n = 39</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Average</td>
<td>$50 400</td>
<td>$102 500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

racism, (2) sexism, and (3) classism. For example, items displaying social beliefs pertaining to each of these are: “In our society, white people have more opportunities than people of other skin colours (Racism)”, “In our society, women are paid less than men or the same work (Sexism)” and, “In our society, rich and poor people have the same opportunity to go to the best quality schools (Classism)”. Participants respond to each statement using a six-point Likert scale ranging from “disagree strongly” (1) to “agree strongly” (6). Items are tallied to produce individual racism, sexism, and classism subscale scores, as well as averaged to produce an overall awareness score. Higher scores indicate greater levels of awareness of social injustice. The measure was found to have sound internal consistency both overall (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$) and within the subscales of racism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .75$), sexism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$), and classism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .71$).

Social Perspective Taking in Contexts of Social Justice. The Perspectives on Social Diversity Interview is a one-to-one, semi-structured interview, first utilized by Rubenstein (2012) that was used to assess adolescents’ social perspective taking in situations depicting violations of social justice (See Appendix D). The original interview consisted of two hypothetical scenarios depicting dyadic adolescent peer interactions of racism and sexism within a school context. A third scenario depicting an example of ‘classism’ was added for the present study. The use of vignettes in qualitative research in the social sciences is a technique that has been traditionally valuable for studying insights, beliefs and meanings about sensitive areas of inquiry, including social justice research (Jenkins, et al., 2010). Each scenario involves two adolescents of different social locations (e.g., race, sex, social class) in conflict over issues that highlight social inequity. For each scenario, there is a clear “perpetrator” and “victim” of social injustice; however, fault can be attributed to either character. In the ‘racism’ scenario, a White adolescent makes a racist comment to a Black classmate in the context of a political discussion:
Ralph and Joe know each other well and have worked together on several projects. Ralph is Black, and Joe is White. One day before class they get into a heated discussion of a current political issue. After some sharp exchanges, Ralph says to Joe, “Of course you won’t get it—you’re White!” In angry response, Joe uses the “N” word to refer to Ralph.

In the ‘sexism’ scenario, a male adolescent makes a sexist remark towards a female classmate pertaining to her choice of clothing:

Jane and John have been classmates throughout high school. One warm spring day, Jane comes to class dressed in a way that stretches, but does not break, the school’s dress code. John starts teasing her and comments on her body parts saying, “Hey, I’d like to see more!” In response, Jane gets upset and accuses him of being a pig.

The classism scenario portrays an interaction of two adolescents of conflicting socioeconomic classes where the more affluent character makes a comment that is insensitive to the less privileged position of her peer:

Jill and Amy have always got along well in the past. Jill’s parents are both lawyers, and Amy’s parents work in lower-paying factory jobs. One day before class Jill jokingly says to Amy, “I like your sweater. Looks like something our housekeeper would wear!” In response, Amy gets upset and calls Jill a spoiled “rich kid”. Jill replies, “What’s your problem?”

The three scenarios were pilot tested prior to start of the full-scale project and appeared to reflect feasible representations of social injustice in adolescent peer interactions. Following the reading of each scenario, participants were asked a series of questions designed to elicit their understanding of the problem (e.g., “What is the problem here? Why is that a problem?”). Participants were then explicitly requested to assume the perspective of each character in the scenario (e.g. “I would like you to think about the problem from John’s point of view”) and asked to differentiate between how each person perceived the situation and their emotional experiences (e.g., “How do you think Ralph understands what has happened? How do you think he feels emotionally? Why would he think/feel this way?”). Participants were also asked to imagine themselves in similar circumstances and questioned about their potential reactions, solutions,
attributions of blame, as well as the personal significance they ascribe to each of the scenarios (i.e., *Is this situation a big deal?*). The interviewer prompted responses to clarify meaning and provoke comments that portray participants’ full understanding (e.g., “Can you say more about that?”) (See Appendix D).

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ or parents’ consent and subsequently transcribed by an independent, professional typist. Transcripts were coded using the analytic framework developed in Rubenstein (2012), following established qualitative analytic techniques (e.g., Creswell, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) and loosely guided by constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Coding occurred in two phases: open and focused. Open coding involved conceptualizing each portion of a selected sample of interviews, identifying distinct meanings and assumptions among adolescents’ responses pertaining to their interpretations of social justice and social group differences. The researcher continuously compared and confirmed recurrent themes and categories emerging from the data. These ideas subsequently provided theoretical focus for the second analytical phase — focused coding. At this level, the earlier codes were used as a guide to selectively combine, organize and expand upon larger segments of data. Focused coding facilitated the construction of increasingly differentiated categories and the integration of overarching themes.

Consistent with Rubenstein (2012), coding of adolescent responses was conducted according to three main levels reflecting qualitatively distinct interpretations of social group differences, with two transitional levels (see ‘Results’ section for more in-depth descriptions of categories). Interviews were assigned a score representing its corresponding perspective taking level on a five level scale (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Levels 1, 3, and 5 correspond to the three main levels, while Levels 2 and 4 are transitional. A second researcher coded a subset of the data to establish inter-rater reliability. Interrater reliability was calculated for racism (Cohen’s κ = .90),
sexism (Cohen’s κ = .86), and classism (Cohen’s κ = .84) scenarios using a subset of approximately 25% of the dataset.

**Critical Thinking.**

The *Actively Open-Minded Thinking* (AOT) Composite (Sa, West, & Stanovich, 1999; Stanovich & West, 1997) was used to assess participants’ critical thinking dispositions or tendencies (See Appendix E). The AOT Composite consists of several subscales that assess different aspects of rational thought. With advice from the authors (Stanovich & West, 1997), an adapted version was used for the present study, using 20 items from five subscales (Sa, West, & Stanovich, 1999): Flexible Thinking (6 items) (e.g., “People should always take into consideration evidence that goes against their beliefs”); Belief Identification (3 items) (e.g., “Abandoning a previous belief is a sign of strong character”); Categorical Thinking (3 items) (e.g., “There are basically two kinds of people in this world: good and bad”); Absolutism/Dualism (3 items) (e.g., “Right and wrong never change”), and Dogmatism (5 items) (e.g., “No one can talk me out of something I know is right”). Participants respond to each item on a six-point Likert scale from “disagree strongly” (1) to “agree strongly” (6). Items from the Belief Identification, Categorical Thinking, Absolutism/Dualism, and Dogmatism subscales were reversed and totaled with the Flexible Thinking score to obtain an overall Critical Thinking score for each participant. A higher score signifies more sophisticated critical thinking dispositions, as evidenced by greater cognitive flexibility and an openness to changing one’s beliefs, while a lower score indicates cognitive rigidity and a resistance to belief change (Sa et al., 1999). The original measure has been widely utilized in psychological research and has sound psychometric properties (Cronbach’s α = .79). The internal consistency for the adapted measure used in this study was good (Cronbach’s α = .76).
Moral Judgment.

The Sociomoral Reflection Measure - Short Form (SRM-SF; Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992) was used to measure the maturity of adolescents’ moral judgment (See Appendix F). The SRM-SF is a free-response pencil-and-paper measure consisting of 11 items requiring participants to evaluate and justify the importance of sociomoral values including (a) contract and truth (e.g., “In general, how important is it for people to tell the truth?”), (b) affiliation (e.g., “Think about when you’ve helped your mother or father. How important is it for children to help their parents?”), (c) life (e.g., “How important is it for a person to live even if that person doesn’t want to?”), (d) property and law (e.g., “How important is it for people to obey the law?”), and (e) legal justice (e.g., “How important is it for judges to send people who break the law to jail?”).

Participants’ justifications are coded and categorized according to criteria in the SRM-SF scoring manual (Gibbs et al., 1992), corresponding to stage of moral judgment. Individual item scores are averaged to generate a Sociomoral Reflection Maturity Score (SRMS), ranging from 100 (least) to 400 (most), reflecting the relative maturity of adolescents’ moral judgment. The SRM-SF is psychometrically sound, showing excellent reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$) and has been widely used with adolescents in the psychological literature. Protocols were scored by the second author of the measure and an additional expert scorer. Inter-rater reliability between the two expert scorers was excellent ($r = .90, p < .01$; Exact Global Stage Agreement: 84%; Global Stage Agreement within One Interval: 100%)

Empathy.

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980) was used to measure adolescents’ levels of empathy (See Appendix G). The IRI consists of four seven-item subscales each assessing related yet clearly discriminable dimensions of empathy: (a) empathic concern, (b)
personal distress, (c) fantasy, and (d) perspective taking. The empathic concern scale measures the tendency to feel sympathy and compassion for others’ misfortune (“I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me”); the personal distress scale assesses discomfort and distress in response to the suffering of others (“Being in a tense emotional situation scares me”); the fantasy scale evaluates how often one transposes oneself imaginatively into fictional situations (i.e. via media, books, movies, plays) (“When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me”), and the perspective taking scale assesses one’s tendency to instinctively adapt the psychological points of views of others in their everyday lives and interactions (“When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to ‘put myself in his shoes’ for a while”). ‘Perspective taking’ in this context is a fixed characteristic of the individual and is cognitive/motivational in nature, making the scale distinguishable from the others, which all have clear affective elements. Given that the present study was primarily concerned with the emotional component of empathy, the perspective taking scale was excluded from analysis.

Participants respond to items using a five point Likert scale, ranging from “does not describe me well” (0), to “describes me well” (4). Empathy levels were assessed by totaling the scores solely from the empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy scales. These indices were all positively related to one another—empathic concern and fantasy ($r = .38, p < .001$), personal distress and fantasy ($r = .30, p = .003$), and empathic concern and personal distress ($r = .25, p = .013$) — justifying combining them into a single variable. A higher score indicated greater levels of emotional empathy. The IRI is a widely used measure and has sound psychometric properties with internal consistency alphas ranging from .70 to .78 for each of the subscales (Davis, 1980). Internal consistency was strong for the overall empathy variable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$) as well as within the individual subscales (personal distress: Cronbach’s $\alpha$
Social Desirability.

Due to the climate of political correctness that oversees public discourse about issues of social justice, this research is vulnerable to the effects of social desirability—the inclination of respondents to misrepresent themselves for the sake of appearing more socially acceptable (Cozby & Bates, 2011). Several studies have shown that adolescents’ explicit beliefs and attitudes about social groups are subject to the influence of social norms and apprehensions about self-presentation (Devine, 1989; Rutland, Cameron, Milne, & McGeorge, 2005). Youth may be hesitant to respond openly and truthfully about issues of social justice out of a fear of researcher condemnation and/or a desire to be perceived as tolerant and open-minded.

An adapted form of Reynolds’ (1982) short form versions of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was used to assess social desirability bias, substituting certain age-appropriate items from the Crandall Social Desirability Test for Children (CSD) (Crandall, 1975) (See Appendix H). The MCSDS and the CSD are popular tools used to determine whether responses on research measures are influenced by a motivation to be viewed favorably by others. This adapted version consisted of 12 ‘true or false’ self-report items, where participants are asked whether they agree or disagree with either socially desirable statements that are largely untrue of almost everyone (e.g., “I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake”) or statements that are socially undesirable but typically true of everyone (e.g., “There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good luck some people have”). The language of some items was also simplified slightly to facilitate adolescents’ understandings. Participant responses are scored according to the number of times they opt for the socially desirable option, with a higher score indicating an increased tendency to respond with social desirability bias. Both Reynolds’ short
forms of the MCSDS (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$) and the CSD (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .66$ to .74) have acceptable psychometric properties.

**Procedure**

Data collection occurred in two phases at each school. The first phase comprised group administration of paper-and-pencil instruments, including the demographic questionnaire and measures of social justice awareness, critical thinking, moral judgment, empathy, and social desirability. Participants completed the measures individually in their respective classrooms, taking approximately 30 minutes to complete the entire package.

The second phase consisted of the one-to-one interview, conducted by four trained graduate students, matched to the sex of each participant, in quiet locations within each school. Before the interview began, participants were told that they would be asked for their opinions about three real-life situations describing adolescent peer interactions. They were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, they could refrain from replying to any question, and that all responses were anonymous and would remain strictly confidential. A hard copy of each scenario was provided to the students for their reference, and the order of presentation was counter-balanced. The entire interview lasted about 45 minutes. At the end of the interview, participants were debriefed about the nature of the study, provided the opportunity to ask any questions, and thanked for their participation.
RESULTS

Results will be presented in two parts, each corresponding to the two objectives of the present investigation and related research questions. The first section is dedicated to explaining variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice through their social awareness and perspective taking; the second section looks at the relationship between adolescents’ understandings of social justice and their key cognitive (i.e., critical thinking, moral judgment) and affective (i.e., empathy) capacities.

I. Examining Adolescents’ Understandings of Social Justice

Social awareness and perspective taking data were analyzed for overall trends as well as differences across areas of social justice (i.e., racism, sexism, classism), grade (age) and important aspects of adolescents’ social locations (i.e., sex, race/ethnicity, SES). Results pertaining to specific research questions were as follows.

To what extent are adolescents aware of problems of social justice? Does their awareness vary across problems of social justice?

Participants’ mean overall social awareness (AWARE) score was 3.66 (SD= 0.88) on a 6-point scale, suggesting that adolescents, on average, are moderately aware of problems of social justice in society today. However, a repeated measures ANOVA revealed that their awareness varied by area of social justice $F (2, 194) = 37.66, p < .001, \eta^2 = .28$. Paired comparisons showed that AWARE-CLASSISM ($M = 4.17, SD = 0.96$) was greater than both AWARE-RACISM ($M = 3.56, SD = 1.10$) ($p < 0.001, d = 0.59$) and AWARE-SEXISM ($M = 3.27, SD = 1.16$) ($p < .001, d = 0.85$). AWARE-RACISM was also significantly greater than AWARE-SEXISM ($p = .004, d = 0.26$). Thus, it appears that adolescents are particularly aware of the
prevalence of classism in modern society, and least aware of problems of sexism. Figure 2 shows the distribution of AWARE scores overall and within areas of social justice.

**Does adolescents’ social perspective taking in contexts of social justice reveal an understanding of social group differences? Does their perspective taking vary across areas of racism, sexism, and classism?**

Adopting a mixed-methods approach, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted to investigate adolescents’ social perspective taking, as described below:

**Qualitative Analyses.**

Social perspective taking (SPT) was assessed in accordance with adolescents’ responses to the *Perspectives on Social Diversity Interview*. Adopting the coding system developed by Rubenstein (2012), five qualitatively distinct levels (three main and two transitional) were identified, reflecting increasingly sophisticated levels of understanding: (Level 1) Interpersonal Perspective, (Level 3) Nominal Perspective, and (Level 5) Social Group perspective. Levels were differentiated along five general themes that emerged in the data: (a) adolescents’ interpretation of the situation as a representation of social injustice, (b) their understanding of the social differences between the two characters in the scenarios, (c) their attributions of blame for the conflict and the rationale behind them, (d) the perceived victim and impact of the event, and the (e) personal and societal significance ascribed to the social justice problems depicted in the scenario (See Table 2 for a summary). These themes were used to loosely guide coding and holistically determine the appropriate SPT level for each scenario. Each of the three main levels, representing variability in adolescents’ SPT will now be described in turn.
Figure 2. Frequency distributions of adolescents’ awareness (AWARE) scores overall and within areas of social justice.
**Table 2.**

*Levels of Adolescent Social Perspective Taking in Contexts of Social Justice.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Level 1: Interpersonal</th>
<th>Level 3: Nominal</th>
<th>Level 5: Social Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation of Conflict</strong></td>
<td>- Conflict is perceived as between two individuals.</td>
<td>- Conflict viewed as between members of different social groups.</td>
<td>- Conflict seen as between members of different social groups, who come from diverse social backgrounds with conflicting perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of Social Differences</strong></td>
<td>- Social group differences are not recognized.</td>
<td>- Social group differences oversimplified or dismissed.</td>
<td>- Social group differences seen as central to the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Emphasis on equality between groups.</td>
<td>- Emphasis on equity between groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attribution of Blame</strong></td>
<td>- Blame attributed based on superficial reasons (e.g., who started conflict).</td>
<td>- Provided interpersonal, social-conventional explanations of blame.</td>
<td>- Blame attributions reflect considerations of societal influences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim / Level of Impact</strong></td>
<td>- Victim of social injustice is not identified.</td>
<td>- Victim of social injustice is somewhat identified.</td>
<td>- Victim of social injustice is clearly identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Stated in purely individualistic terms.</td>
<td>- Perceived impact is not sensitive to social group membership.</td>
<td>- Impact on individual as a member of a more vulnerable social group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significance</strong></td>
<td>- Dismissive; incident perceived as inconsequential.</td>
<td>- Magnitude of conflict observed at direct, interpersonal levels.</td>
<td>- Seriousness of conflict interpreted at a broader, societal level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less likely to have acted or interfered in conflict.</td>
<td>- May have acted or interfered in conflict.</td>
<td>- More likely to have acted or interfered in conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Level 1: Interpersonal Perspective.

Adolescents with the least sophisticated interpretations perceived the conflicts solely on an individual or interpersonal level—between classmates whose respective races, sexism, social classes were considered largely extraneous to the situation — and did not allude to issues of social inequity and group differences. This perspective will now be illustrated according to the five themes (see Table 3 for examples of Level 1 responses).

Interpretation of Conflict. At Level 1, adolescents were largely ignorant of the social justice component of the scenarios. The conflicts were understood as isolated disputes involving two peers, who just so happened to be members of opposing social groups. These adolescents often stated that the perpetrator’s actions were offensive but not for reasons pertaining to social justice (e.g., he or she is being a ‘jerk’). Furthermore, their actions were often dismissed or excused (e.g., he or she was ‘just joking’). Any reference to injustice or unfairness seemed to represent natural events (e.g., “boys will be boys”) rather than real social problems.

Understanding of Social Differences. Participants at Level 1 did not appear to recognize or pay attention to the social group differences that existed between the primary actors in the scenarios in terms of privilege and power. While they may have referred to characters’ race, sexism and class, these aspects were seen as more or less irrelevant to the conflict.

Attributions of Blame. Adolescents at Level 1 based their decisions pertaining to blame on superficial factors and ignored violations of social justice. They often blamed the victims of social injustice (Black, female and less wealthy characters) usually because they believed these persons instigated the conflict and therefore ‘deserved’ the discriminatory remarks that were
### Table 3.
**Examples of Level 1 Social Perspective Taking — Interpersonal Perspective.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Interpretation of Conflict** | • “I think the problem is that they don’t understand each other, even though they are friends. [Participant #6]”  
• “I guess the main problem is that they disagree on a current political issue…you can’t get angry with someone just because they disagree with you. [Participant #78]”  
• “I think Jane is probably having a bad day. Guys are always saying that stuff to girls, just perverted in a way. But it’s funny. [Participant #64]”  
• “(Jane) is being judged on how she dressed…you don’t talk to someone like that, and no matter how they’re dressed … it’s the way they express themselves…and he shouldn’t tease her about it. [Participant #83]”  
• “Amy shouldn’t look down on Jill, especially if they’re friends. You should never say something like that to a friend. It’s not polite to talk about how much money somebody has or doesn’t have. It’s rude. [Participant #75]” |
| **Understanding of Social Differences** | • *Participant:* “Well, both of them got angry at each other and called each other names, and basically…made it into a bigger issue by calling each other names.”  
*Interviewer:* “So, why is that a problem?”  
*Participant:* “It’s really offensive to both of them. They didn’t have to start calling each other names. [Participant #90]”  
• “Teenage boys…will be teenage boys. You can’t really stop guys from looking at you or thinking of what you’re wearing and stuff. You just can’t stop them. [Participant #42]”  
• “I feel you can’t cure the ‘piggyness’ of guys. You’ve just got to put that on the backburner. [Participant #100]”  
• “Amy thinks Jill is calling her cheap because her clothes are cheap because her housekeeper wears them. [Participant #46]”  
• “I know it’s kind of like a joke, but it kind of makes Amy feel that Jill thinks she’s better than her because their maid wears what Amy wears. [Participant #9]” |
| **Attribution of Blame** | • “Ralph might be more to blame because he’s the one that really started to push it. I don’t think Joe would have called him the N word in the first place, if Ralph didn’t make that “you’re white” comment. [Participant #78]”  
• “I don’t really know, because Ralph said it first, which provoked the response from Joe, so maybe he is more to blame, but really, I wouldn’t blame anyone, because it’s just a freaking argument about politics. People often lose their minds there when they start arguing their viewpoints. [Participant #109]”  
• “Honestly, I think Jane was asking for it…I think she was probably looking for attention by her clothing, so I guess it’s kind of fair for him to say something like that. She shouldn’t really come to school dressed like that…[Participant #91]”  
• “If you are going to wear skimpy clothes, people are going to comment. It’s just the way it is…the way our society goes. [Participant #103]”  
• “I guess it is Jane’s fault that she came to school dressed like that…she probably knew that she was going to get some kind of comment…If you don’t want to get attention, don’t dress like that…it’s kind of inevitable. [Participant #94]”  
• “Jill didn’t mean it seriously, and Amy is probably a little uptight, so it’s kind of like making a mountain out of a molehill. [Participant #103]” |

*(Table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim / Level of Impact</td>
<td>“They have known each other for a long time and so that could have affected their relationship between each other if it didn’t get stopped, and they need to know that they can’t get angry at each other for things like this. [Participant #78]”&lt;br&gt;“Jane is just being sensitive...I mean he’s not even “dissing” her...I mean I hear that a lot. So I think it’s funny. [Participant #78]”&lt;br&gt;“Well, they’re really good friends and Jill at the end, when she replied “what’s your problem?” she probably didn’t mean it as a mean thing, and I think that if Amy can realize that they can get over it and be friends again. [Participant #69]”&lt;br&gt;“I think Jill was just joking, but the joke she made wasn’t the greatest joke because it was making fun of Amy, but I think that in her head she just saw it as a joke and that was it, but she didn’t really think that it was going to hurt Amy, but it did. I just think Jill was just playing around. [Participant #5]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>“The line that he said to her is nothing really hurtful. It’s nothing, and Jane is getting upset over this one small thing. [Participant #64]”&lt;br&gt;“I don’t know, because they are just being teenagers...Like he was rude for teasing her and stuff and inappropriate...(but) it’s not a huge deal. [Participant #91]”&lt;br&gt;“I think it was like an accident. It’s not like she wanted her to get upset and did it purposely, I think it’s just what she thought about her sweater. [Participant #90]”&lt;br&gt;“It was just a harmless ... she probably didn’t really mean anything by it and sometimes you do slip up and you say mean things. [Participant #100]”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
made. For example, in the ‘racism’ scenario, adolescents at Level 1 claimed the Black victim provoked the racist slur because he first brought up the White perpetrator’s race. In the ‘sexism’ scenario, adolescents frequently mentioned that the female was inviting the male perpetrator’s attention based on how she was dressed and therefore was more responsible for the conflict. ‘Victim blaming’ was less common for the classism scenario; however, participants at Level 1 regularly claimed that the less affluent victim reacted excessively to the insulting comments of the more affluent perpetrator.

Victimization / Impact. Participants at Level 1 were less likely to identify a clear victim of social injustice in each of the scenarios. Furthermore, the short and long-term implications of the conflict for the individuals were brought up on completely individualistic bases, with minimal reference to social group membership. These adolescents stressed concerns primarily about the relationship or friendship between the two characters that did not appear to involve consideration of race, sex, or class (e.g., “It doesn’t need to happen and there’s no point in ruining a friendship over a dumb fight. If (they) just stopped and thought about the situation, it could be avoided. [Participant #68]”).

Significance. At Level 1, adolescents were dismissive of social justice concerns in the conflicts. They typically did not believe that the events portrayed in the scenarios were a significant concern and/or minimized the implications of the acts of racism, sexism, and classism (e.g., “Yeah, I don’t think it’s a big deal because it’s just like a small argument that they went through. [Participant #67]”).

Level 3: Nominal Perspective.

At the observed intermediate level of SPT, adolescents appeared to adopt what is referred to as a nominal perspective. These participants demonstrated more sophisticated social perspective taking than peers at Level 1 in that they recognized the significance of characters’
race, sex, and class to the conflicts. Nevertheless, their interpretations failed to highlight group disparities that contributed to protagonists’ differing points of view. Adolescents’ evaluations of the scenarios were dominated by concerns about ‘equality’ and evenhandedness between characters, but not concerns about ‘equity’. Table 4 displays examples of Level 3 responses.

**Interpretation of Conflict.** Adolescents at Level 3 appeared to understand the significance of race, sex, and class to each of the conflicts; however, their interpretations lacked sophistication regarding themes of social justice. While these participants often explicitly or implicitly acknowledged acts of racism, sexism, and classism had occurred, they were naïve to the complex manifestations of these problems as well as their broader consequences for society. Level 3 responses often emphasized the lack of respect that was shown by each of the perpetrators in the scenarios towards the victims (i.e., comments were ‘rude’ or ‘mean’) and did not consider how these situations reflected larger social problems.

**Understanding of Social Differences.** At Level 3, participants’ understandings of social group differences tended to be oversimplified or dismissed. Adolescents typically spoke in “politically correct” terms, emphasizing neutrality and evenhandedness between the two characters in the scenarios. For example, in the ‘racism’ scenario, participants at Level 3 typically demonstrated a ‘colourblindness’ where they minimized or ignored the advantages and disadvantages that result from simply being White or Black. Colourblindness was further evident in that Level 3 responses frequently reflected the themes that all races are the “same” and that race “doesn’t matter” in our society. As one participant said, “It shouldn’t have to go into (his) head that ‘he’s white, I’m Black.’ It shouldn’t even have processed in his head to even say it [Participant #100]”.

Table 4.  
*Examples of Level 3 Social Perspective Taking — Nominal Perspective.*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Interpretation of Conflict** | “Racism, I guess (is the problem). Because (Ralph) thinks (Joe) wouldn’t understand him because he’s white and that he would understand more than him because he’s a different colour... and then (Joe) uses the N word which is pretty bad. [Participant #91]”  
“(The N-word) a pretty derogatory term for people of this race and it stretches back pretty far into history for … it’s pretty common for anyone to know that the N word shouldn’t be used to address anybody. [Participant #106]”  
“Probably John’s comment (is the problem). I completely agree with her getting upset, I think that’s just rude…a guy should never comment rudely on what a girl wears. [Participant #96]”  
“Well, it’s not really a thing you should say to someone who is poor. It doesn’t matter what (Amy’s) wearing…if you get along well, why say something like that? If you know she’s going to get offended by it, it’s not the right thing to say. [Participant #10]”  
“(Amy) is really hurt because of where her parents work… and how they make their money, and she’s being teased on something that she has no control over. [Participant #83]” |
| **Understanding of Social Differences** | “I think the problem is that they are judging each other based on what they look like… they are both people, so it really shouldn’t matter if they are Black and White, and they’re kind of blaming it on being a different kind of skin tone instead of facing the actual problem …Just because you’re one skin tone doesn’t mean that you get it more than the person with a different skin tone. [Participant #68]”  
“John… makes her comfort level go down… If they’ve been classmates throughout high school and then all of a sudden, John starts to tease her, I think she would feel a little upset, because she thought she could trust John to leave her alone or respect her.”  
“John’s not having respect for her. His comment … embarrassed her in front of the others, treating her like a piece of dirt … not like a human, not respectful. [Participant #73]”  
“Amy’s parents don’t get paid a lot, so they have to pay for the bills, the house and groceries and stuff and they may not be able to afford nice clothes and Jill’s parents get paid a lot of money and they can probably get her more things than Amy can get. [Participant #7]”  
“Amy’s offended because she doesn’t really have (Jill’s) privileges, so Jill’s comment makes Amy feel that she is at a lower level of living than Jill is…Amy is not able to have certain things that Jill has (and) Jill seems to be taking this for granted. [Participant #48]” |

*(Table continues)*
Theme | Examples
---|---
**Attributions of Blame** | • “I would say Ralph was the one who made the initial mistake of assuming that because of (Joe’s) skin colour that they won’t understand the current political issue, but in response, Joe wasn’t a better person, and equally made the problem worse. [Participant #106]”
• “No. They’re both to blame…Because they both used racist terms. They both were being ignorant. [Participant #34]”
• “Joe is to blame more, because it is really, really offensive no matter what… (calling someone) ‘white’ is just a colour. The N word is a ‘slave’ word...so you have to differentiate that. [Participant #50]”
• “I think it’s a little of both. I think she was looking for attention and I think that he was being inappropriate with his comments on her. I guess she wanted attention, but not like that kind of attention with those comments and stuff. [Participant #77]”
• “I think in a way they are both to blame and in a way neither of them are to blame. They’re both to blame because Jill said something insensitive and Amy got probably too upset about it, and neither of them are to blame because Jill made a joke and…Amy interpreted it wrong. It’s not her fault for interpreting something wrong. It happens. [Participant #93]”
• “I think, regardless of what a woman is wearing, it’s not okay for a man to objectify her one way or another. [Participant #105]”

**Victim / Level of Impact** | • “Ralph is probably feeling angered maybe, because he obviously believes that white people have a completely different personality and lifestyle than Black people …and I think Joe was just saying his own perspective on the political issue … and for Ralph to say, ‘of course you don’t get it, you’re white’— (Joe’s) sort of shocked, in a way, (and thinks) ‘well, I wasn’t bringing colour into it… but if you are, then I’ll call you that name’. [Participant #73]”
• I guess this is a problem that comes up between a lot of cross gender relationships… I’m pretty sure she is thinking that John is coming on to her in a disrespectful way… It makes her feel more of a piece of meat than a human being. [Participant #80]”
• “I think she doesn’t want the reputation of dressing like that…you might get this kind of scared thought that everyone is commenting on you like this… and if you get the reputation of that, it sticks. [Participant #72]”
• “It’s just the way that Jill said that her sweater looks like something her housekeeper would wear, just puts (Amy) down on a lower level than Jill, so Amy thinks less of herself. [Participant #78]”

**Significance** | • “It bothers me a lot, because I don’t like when people are discriminated against just because of their colour. I mean you can’t really judge someone based on their skin colour…It should be over by now. I don’t think discrimination should even exist, but I know it still exists, and that bothers me because I don’t like to see that happening. [Participant #33]”
• “I think it’s a big deal because it’s not right to have girls used for their bodies and to be looked at as stuff. [Participant #72]”
• “Yeah. It happens a lot… it’s looking at a girl in a certain way paying attention to her body and being rude, a sexist pig like she says. Then I guess it’s where he takes it from there. [Participant #82]”
• “It kind of does bother me because they are two friends who have parents who work at totally different places and earn different amounts, and children should not have the right to just say bad things about their friends just because of the wage difference in their parents’ lives. [Participant #89]”

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Attributions of Blame. Adolescents at Level 3 incorporated social group considerations into their attributions of blame, which was revealed in two main ways. First, corresponding with their concerns for equality, many participants believed that the characters in the scenarios were equally at fault, despite there being a clear victim and perpetrator of social injustice. In the ‘racism’ scenario, participants at Level 3 claimed that the White and Black adolescents committed similar transgressions, as both made references to each other’s race, thereby discounting the historical and social implications of the racial slur. Likewise, several adolescents argued that the female victim was equally as responsible as the male perpetrator in the ‘sexism’ scenario because her attire “stretched the rules”. Some participants went so far as asserting that the male’s harassing comments were deserved (i.e., “she was asking for it”). For the classism scenario, some believed that the less affluent adolescent merited blame because she exacerbated the problem by reacting and responding with a hostile comment of her own.

Other adolescents at Level 3, however, did find the perpetrator to be more at fault for violating social justice. While believing that both characters acted inappropriately, these participants acknowledged that the perpetrator’s actions were more harmful and meaningful than those of the victim. For example, participants typically acknowledged that even though the Black character was first to raise the White character’s race in the ‘racism’ scenario, it was the White adolescent who took the argument to another level by using a racial slur. Nevertheless, blame attributions at Level 3 failed to show an understanding of why perpetrators’ actions were particularly offensive.

Victimization / Impact. At Level 3, adolescents identified the victims of racism, sexism, and classism; however, they overlooked or deemphasized the broader, societal implications of social inequity for the characters who are members of more vulnerable social groups. Consequently, the impact of the violation of social justice portrayed was observed on a lesser
scale, particularly its effect on the victim’s self-concept and reputation (e.g., “I guess (John) was saying it as a joke, but (Jane) would take it seriously, because it’s offensive…he’s basically calling her a ‘slut’... no one wants to be called a ‘slut’ [Participant #12]”).

**Significance.** Adolescents at Level 3 interpreted the conflicts as serious issues and were usually bothered by the violations of social justice. Responses at this level typically reflected participants’ concerns for equality among races, sexes, and classes as well as interpersonal concerns (i.e., respect, the relationship between the two characters); however, they did not raise societal concerns about social injustice. For example, contemplating the conflict in the racism scenario, one adolescent said, “Yeah (it is a big deal), because racism isn’t fair. Everybody should be equal, just because they have different skin colours— it doesn’t mean anything [Participant #90].”

**Level 5: Social Group Perspective.**

Adolescents exhibiting the most sophisticated interpretations of the scenarios assumed a *social group* perspective; their reasoning reflected an ability to contemplate the conflicts at a broader societal level as well as a mature understanding of the social differences that exist between members of different races, sexes, and social classes. Participants at this level generally expressed concerns about ‘equity’ rather than solely having concerns for ‘equality’, which was not evident at less sophisticated levels. Examples of Level 5 responses are exhibited in Table 5.

**Interpretation of Conflict.** At Level 5, adolescents perceived the conflicts as unmistakable examples of violations of social justice. Similar to Level 3 social perspective taking, participants at Level 5 identified race, sex, and social class as vital to understanding the conflicts. Unlike adolescents at the previous level, however, they also demonstrated an
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of Conflict</td>
<td>“The problem is racism...Ralph just feels that he comes from a very different perspective than Joe and doesn’t feel that he is being fully understood and I would imagine is now insulted after Joe used a very heated racial slur...there is a difference in upbringing and culture that (he) just can’t explain to Joe because there is just so much history, and I would imagine that he is very angry that Joe responded so harshly...I think Joe just doesn’t understand what it’s like to not be part of the majority. [Participant #105]”</td>
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<td>“I think it’s a problem because...sexual harassment kind of happens all the time and we don’t even notice it...and just be like “oh, it’s accepted.”...It is kind of a bullying—harassment. It’s dividing the genders...degrading to women. [Participant #95]”</td>
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<td>“I think she’s probably feeling a bit subjugated, maybe sexualized in a way...It’s putting her in a sexual situation that she has not initiated or shown any interest in. [Participant #97]”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Well, I mean...it’s classism. It’s saying that because I’ve got more money, I can say stuff like this to you because I have more money. I can treat you like garbage. [Participant #14]”</td>
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<td>“The problem is that Jill thinks that she is superior to Amy because of the class difference between their parents, and she calls Amy on that and makes a comment about her clothing and about her status...it’s a problem because our society tries to make us think that class isn’t really a problem, and it’s more about the importance of values in a person and not their class and where they come from. [Participant #62]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Social Differences</td>
<td>There are tons of issues that, because Joe is White, would have no idea what it feels like...Joe using the N word to refer to Ralph is a completely inappropriate response because of the historical inequity between the two groups...A racist comment made by a Black person to a White person isn’t as damaging as (one) made by a White person to a Black person...the N-word carries a weight because it has been used to oppress a group of people for hundreds of years. [Participant #99]”</td>
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<td>“I guess generally in society white people are born with more privileges...he thinks that Joe never had any of those problems. [Participant #74]”</td>
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<td>“He’s probably feeling surprised and uncomfortable and she doesn’t understand why he would say something like that, because there’s not that same sort of social pressure with girls to make comments like that to guys. You don’t really see that ever. [Participant #95]”</td>
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<td>“Classism applies to this situation because they grew up in separate worlds, because (Jill’s) had a more material rich life than Amy has and...Amy parents don’t make that much money, they are not going to be so worried about how Amy dresses. It’s just going to be whatever they can afford and what she can wear...she is in a hard enough situation that it doesn’t really matter, style and what not, if you don’t have money. And then Jill says that...it was just really petty. [Participant #14]”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I think that Jill feels the way she does because of the way that she is raised and maybe because of what she’s had. She doesn’t really understand the troubles that Amy has to go through looking at someone who has a higher standard of living {Participant #62}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Blame</td>
<td>Well, I think that Ralph would be partially more to blame than Joe because he is the one who said he wouldn’t understand. But, I wouldn’t blame him at all. I think I wouldn’t even blame him in the end at all, because he feels that way because of the way he was nurtured and raised...And society has a deep influence on perceptions of race itself; society makes people think that (race) is important...I think if anyone is at fault, it’s how society is training us to see certain things. [Participant #108]”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of Blame</td>
<td>“I’m just not willing to blame men so much, because I think just as much confusion is placed on the way that they’re supposed to react to the way we’re supposed to dress. So, it’s not okay to make sexist comments, but it’s also not okay to condition people to think that they have to dress or not dress a certain way…Society as a whole (is to blame), the way we see things in the media. I think sometimes our parents…we can get our biases from our parents, depending on how they themselves were conditioned…they pass it on to us. Sexism is everywhere. So what can you do? It’s not surprising that things play out like this. [Participant #105]”</td>
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<td>“There are definitely bigger issues here. I’m not going to say it’s Jill’s fault or Amy’s fault…I really think the issue would be Jill’s parents…her upbringing, the idea that presumably this girl takes pride in being wealthy and feels that she can insult and degrade other people for not having that wealth and really, it’s not because of her, it’s because of her parents and I think that there is nothing wrong with having money, there is nothing wrong with being a lawyer, but if you are unable to actually explain to your children that there’s nothing better about it…that’s a problem. [Participant #99]”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victim / Level of Impact</td>
<td>“I guess he’s saying “of course, you don’t get it, you’re white,” could be because…there’s definitely certain area of cities, that have unfortunately segregated certain races or ethnic groups, and unfortunately, still in North America for example, a lot of African Americans…still experience a lot of poverty, so you might be saying … “you don’t understand it because you’re white,” “you don’t understand what I’ve been through because I’m Black. [Participant #81]”</td>
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<td>“I don’t think (Joe) realizes how Ralph feels. Because he probably has never been treated how Ralph has been treated, so he doesn’t know how he is feeling and so Ralph just gets angry, I guess. [Participant #47]”</td>
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<td>“ She feels violated as a girl… it makes a girl (not feel) safe because all the guys are watching her…they might end up doing something bad…it’s an indicator. So that girl should be careful [Participant #29]”</td>
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<td>“The solution is on such a great scale that I think that individually we can do very little to affect it. Individually, we can just help the people we know come over the barriers of class. But on a large scale, class does exist and we can’t deny that, and there are really rich people in the world and then there are people who are impoverished and really poor, and that class difference will not change for a while. We have to work together really, as humans to overcome that barrier. It’s going to take a lot of effort. [Participant #99]”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>“Yeah, it pisses me off…I don’t know what to do when this kind of stuff happens…If society has had this problem (racism) for all these years, how the hell are you supposed to ask these teenagers to fix it ?…People have been arguing about this stuff for years, and then you want to suspend kids or jail kids for stuff like this? Give kids tools to work past race instead…It starts with these kids—these youths that are going to move on and become the parents of tomorrow who are going to teach their kids what to do. But, yeah, these kids are just full of anger… [Participant #109]”</td>
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<td>“(Sexism) especially (bothers me) because it has happened to me and friends around me and I see it going on so casually that it doesn’t get noticed at all. It goes on all the time and it’s hard to say something, because it does happen all the time. So it bothers me when I see it, so if I can do anything about it, I would, just because I think it’s important that people understand that it’s not an okay thing to do. So if I saw this it would definitely bother me. [Participant #95]”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I mean it bothers me that there’s still that whole societal pyramid of importance, that people who aren’t doing so well are considered less than people who have more money. That just doesn’t seem right. [Participant #102]”</td>
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</table>
understanding of the diverse experiences, histories, beliefs, and values associated with belonging to different social groups. Participants at Level 5 recognized that simply being Black or White, male or female, or belonging to more or less affluent classes directly contributed to characters’ conflicting attitudes and behaviours in the scenarios. Thus, these adolescents clearly understood that the individual scenarios were manifestations of larger problems in society.

**Understanding of Social Differences.** Participants demonstrating Level 5 social perspective taking appreciated the social group differences that existed between the two protagonists in the scenarios. Several adolescents acknowledged longstanding tensions between Whites and Blacks while discussing the “racism” scenario, citing historical examples including slavery and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Participants understood that the racist slur used by the White character was a symbol of the oppression enforced by the White majority (e.g., “He used a word that has years of oppression behind it. And when you bring up that kind of deep-seated pain … it automatically will be made much greater [Participant #102]”). Adolescents at Level 5 also identified how characters’ social group membership reflected differing positions of power and privilege. Participants adopting a social group perspective acknowledged that Black individuals, females and those with lower socioeconomic backgrounds remain vulnerable and disadvantaged minority groups in the 21st century, and are still victimized by a system that discriminates across social groups. Accordingly, many adolescents at this level affirmed that the advantaged perpetrator did not appreciate the unique experiences and viewpoints of the victim (e.g., not understanding what he/she “has to go through”).

**Attributions of Blame.** At Level 5, adolescents were able look beyond the immediate scenario and consider the role of society in the conflict. Participants may or may not have blamed the perpetrator of social injustice but, importantly, highlighted the societal norms, intergroup experiences, cultural upbringing and other environmental factors that established the conditions
for problems of social injustice to occur. For example, several adolescents recognized that the actions of both characters in the scenarios were attributable to complex social influences and therefore asserted that “society as a whole” or “bigger issues” were responsible for the conflicts (e.g., “It’s society that I would blame…that’s what made us believe that White people are different than Black people [Participant #73]).

**Victimization / Impact.** Participants with Level 5 social perspective taking clearly identified the victim of social injustice without qualification. There was evidence of vulnerability or negative impact of social inequity towards the individual as a member of a disadvantaged and marginalized social group. Discussing the classism scenario, one participant said, “If you’re not middle class, you’re looked down upon by society … and then there’s resentment…because the lower class doesn’t have the same resources that the upper class has [Participant #102]”.

Adolescents looked past the specific interactions in the scenarios and recognized that they represented issues to be resolved by larger society, requiring changes to the prevailing system. For example, some at this level recognized that harassment portrayed in the sexism scenario reflected male privilege (e.g., “It’s blatantly sexism, but it’s so blatant that … guys feel that they can just take that “role”…you don’t just have that attitude all of a sudden [Participant #106]”). These adolescents often demonstrated an understanding of the hierarchical arrangement of society according to race, sex, and class as well as the diverse factors that uphold the existing structure and power differential.

**Significance.** Adolescents at Level 5 appreciated the significance of problems of social justice on a broader scale. Participants provided comprehensive social explanations, including the betterment of humanity and the progress of our society, to justify why they were personally affected by the instances of social inequity. For example, one participant stated, “I think that the fact that this is the way that they’re having their argument suggests that, as a society, we still
have issues with racism, and we don’t know how to deal with each other’s race or to talk about culture in a meaningful or constructive way… and that’s a problem [Participant #105].

Quantitative Analyses.

Outcomes from the above qualitative analyses of adolescents’ interview responses were subsequently analyzed quantitatively to examine participants’ overall levels of social perspective taking as well as any differences across the three areas of social justice. Adolescents’ mean overall SPT level was 2.96 (SD = 0.92) on a 5-pt scale, suggesting that on average participants interpreted conflicts of social justice from a Level 3 “nominal” perspective. Relatively few adolescents assumed a clear Level 1 “interpersonal” perspective or Level 5 “social group” perspective. However, a repeated measures ANOVA showed that adolescents’ SPT varied by area of social justice (F(2, 194) = 8.28, p < .001, η² = .08). Paired comparisons illustrated that SPT was greater for SPT-RACISM (M = 3.16, SD = 0.95) than both SPT-CLASSISM (M = 2.97, SD = 1.10) (p = .034, d = 0.18) and SPT-SEXISM (M = 2.77, SD = 1.16) (p < .001, d = 0.37). There was also a trend showing that SPT-CLASSISM levels were higher than levels for SPT-SEXISM (p = .052, d = 0.18). These findings indicate that adolescents demonstrated the most sophisticated SPT in contexts depicting racism and, comparatively, the least sophisticated SPT in sexism contexts. Frequency distributions of SPT scores are displayed in Figure 3.

Do adolescents’ understandings of social justice vary as a function of their grade (age) and aspects of their social location (sex, race/ethnicity, and SES)?

Awareness of Problems of Social Justice.

To explore the potential effects of grade (9 and 12), sex (male and female), race/ethnicity (majority and minority), and socioeconomic status (higher and lower) on adolescents’ awareness of problems of social justice (ARE), 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVAs were
Figure 3. Frequency distributions of adolescents’ social perspective taking (SPT) scores overall and within areas of social justice.
conducted. Two models were run for AWARE overall and within areas of social justice. The first model included only the main effects of grade and each of the social location variables (See Table 6).

Results showed that Grade 12 adolescents ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.65$) were significantly more aware of problems of social justice than Grade 9 adolescents ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.84$) ($F(1,91) = 34.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$). Furthermore, the effect of grade was consistent across all areas of social justice: AWARE-RACISM ($F(1, 91) = 25.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$), AWARE-SEXISM ($F(1, 91) = 22.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$), and AWARE-CLASSISM ($F(1, 91) = 16.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$).

There was a trend indicating that racial/ethnic minorities ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.82$) had greater awareness overall than majority adolescents ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.94$) ($F(1, 91) = 3.11$, $p = .081$, $\eta^2 = .03$). This overall effect was primarily accounted for by a significant main effect on AWARE-RACISM ($F(1, 91) = 4.47$, $p = .037$, $\eta^2 = .05$), which was not found on AWARE-SEXISM or AWARE-CLASSISM.

While there was no main effect of SES on adolescents’ awareness overall ($F(1,81) = 2.51$, $p = .12$), higher SES adolescents ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.03$) had greater AWARE-CLASSISM than lower SES adolescents ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.88$) ($F(1, 91) = 5.12$, $p < .026$, $\eta^2 = .05$). There were no SES differences on AWARE-RACISM or AWARE-CLASSISM.

There were no main effects of sex on AWARE overall ($F(1,91) = 1.54$, $p = .22$) or within any of the social justice areas, suggesting that male and female adolescents appear to have similar levels of awareness of problems of social justice.
Table 6.
Main Effects of Grade, Sex, Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status on Awareness Overall and Within Areas of Social Justice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>AWARE</th>
<th>AWARE-RACISM</th>
<th>AWARE-SEXISM</th>
<th>AWARE-CLASSISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34.82</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (between groups)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
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</table>
The second ANOVA included all two-way interactions to determine whether there were significant interaction effects on AWARE among social location variables (See Table 7). Three-way and four-way interactions were not examined due to the difficulty with interpreting such interactions and because there was no theoretical basis to do so. Cell means are presented in Appendix I.

There was a trend indicating a significant two-way interaction between grade and SES on AWARE overall \((F(1, 85) = 3.08, p = .083, \eta^2 = .04)\). This trend was largely accounted for by a significant interaction in the area of AWARE-SEXISM \((F(1, 85) = 6.05, p = .037, \eta^2 = .07)\), but not on AWARE-RACISM or AWARE-CLASSISM. Results suggest that there were greater grade-related differences in AWARE overall and AWARE-SEXISM among higher SES adolescents compared to lower SES adolescents (see Figure 4). An analysis of simple effects showed that grade effects on AWARE overall were significant for both higher SES \((F(1, 94) = 32.35, p < .001)\) and lower SES \((F(1, 94) = 10.79, p = .001)\) adolescents. For AWARE-SEXISM, grade effects were significant among higher SES \((F(1, 94) = 30.57, p < .001)\) adolescents and there was a trend indicating significance among lower SES \((F(1, 94) = 3.84, p = .053)\) adolescents.

While there was no interaction between grade and sex on AWARE overall \((F(1, 85) = 2.71, p = .104)\), there was a significant two-way interaction on AWARE-RACISM \((F(1, 85) = 5.46, p = .022, \eta^2 = .06)\), indicating that there were greater grade-related differences in AWARE-RACISM among males compared to females (see Figure 5). Tests of simple effects demonstrated that the effects of grade on AWARE-RACISM were significant for both males \((F(1, 94) = 33.76, p < .001)\) and females \((F(1, 94) = 4.05, p = .047)\).
Table 7.  
*Two-Way Interactions Among Grade, Sex, Race/Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status on AWARE Overall and Within Areas of Social Justice.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>AWARE</th>
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<th>AWARE-RACISM</th>
<th></th>
<th>AWARE-SEXISM</th>
<th></th>
<th>AWARE-CLASSISM</th>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade x SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.847</td>
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<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade x Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex x Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>.817</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex x SES</td>
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<td>0.30</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade x Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity x SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (between groups)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>85</td>
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</table>
Figure 4. Two-way interactions between grade and SES on awareness overall (AWARE) and within the area of sexism (AWARE-SEXISM)
Figure 5. Two-way interaction between grade and sex on awareness of racism (AWARE-RACISM).
Social Perspective Taking.

To determine the effects of grade, sex, race/ethnicity, and SES on adolescents’ social perspective taking both overall and across areas of social justice, 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVAs were again conducted. Two models were run for SPT overall and within each area of social justice. The first model included only the main effects of each of the four social location variables (See Table 8).

Similar to the results for AWARE, Grade 12 adolescents ($M = 3.39, SD = 0.89$) exhibited more sophisticated SPT than Grade 9 adolescents ($M = 2.51, SD = 0.71$) ($F(1, 91) = 27.52, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$). This effect was consistent across all areas of social justice: SPT-RACISM ($F(1, 91) = 26.79, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$), SPT-SEXISM ($F(1, 91) = 17.33, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$), and SPT-CLASSISM ($F(1, 91) = 13.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$).

While there was no effect of sex on SPT overall ($F(1, 91) = 0.37, p = .55$), there was a trend indicating that females ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.18$) had more sophisticated SPT-SEXISM than males ($M = 2.59, SD = 1.13$) ($F(1, 91) = 3.03, p = .085, \eta^2 = .03$). There were no sex differences for SPT-RACISM or SPT-CLASSISM.

There was also no effect of SES on SPT overall ($F(1, 91) = 0.79, p = .377$); however, there was a trend indicating that higher SES adolescents ($M = 3.15, SD = 1.17$) had more sophisticated SPT-CLASSISM than lower SES adolescents ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.03$) ($F(1, 91) = 3.66, p = .059, \eta^2 = .04$).

There were no effects of race/ethnicity on SPT overall ($F(1, 91) = 0.06, p = .809$) or within any of the three areas of social justice. Therefore, SPT appears to be consistent among both racial/ethnic majority and minority adolescents.
Table 8.
Main Effects of Grade, Sex, Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status on SPT Overall and Within Areas of Social Justice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SPT</th>
<th>SPT-RACISM</th>
<th>SPT-SEXISM</th>
<th>SPT-CLASSISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.52</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (between groups)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As was performed for AWARE, the second ANOVA included two-way interactions to determine whether there were significant interaction effects on SPT among social location variables (See Table 9). See Appendix J for cell means.

A two-way interaction between grade and SES was found for SPT overall ($F(1, 85) = 6.13, p = .015, \eta^2 = .07$). Within social justice areas, this interaction was found on SPT-SEXISM ($F(1, 85) = 5.13, p = .026, \eta^2 = .06$) and SPT-CLASSISM ($F(1, 85) = 6.53, p = .012, \eta^2 = .07$), but not SPT-RACISM. This indicates that there were greater grade-related differences in social perspective taking among higher SES adolescents compared to lower SES adolescents (See Figure 6). An analysis of simple effects showed that grade effects on SPT overall were significant for both higher SES ($F(1, 94) = 38.46, p < .001$) and lower SES ($F(1, 94) = 4.25, p = .042$) students. However, for SPT-SEXISM and SPT-CLASSISM respectively, grade-related gains were significant for higher SES ($F(1, 94) = 25.20, p < .001$; $F(1, 94) = 24.96, p < .001$) but not for lower SES ($F(1, 94) = 1.72, p = .192$; $F(1, 94) = 0.92, p = .341$) adolescents.

There was also a trend pointing towards a two-way interaction between sex and race/ethnicity on SPT overall ($F(1, 85) = 3.29, p = .073, \eta^2 = .04$). Within areas of social justice, this interaction was found in the area of SPT-RACISM ($F(1, 85) = 5.24, p = .025, \eta^2 = .06$) and SPT-CLASSISM ($F(1, 85) = 4.18, p = .044, \eta^2 = .05$), but not on SPT-SEXISM. Thus, in areas of racism and classism, majority males had more sophisticated SPT than minority males, while minority females’ SPT was more sophisticated than majority females (See Figure 7).
Table 9.
Two-Way Interactions Among Grade, Sex, Race/Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status on SPT Overall and Within Areas of Sexism and Classism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SPT</th>
<th>SPT-RACISM</th>
<th>SPT-SEXISM</th>
<th>SPT-CLASSISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Df</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade x SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex x Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade x Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.890</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex x SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade x Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity x SES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (between groups)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Two-way interactions between grade and SES on SPT overall (SPT) and within areas of sexism (SPT-SEXISM) and classism (SPT-CLASSISM).
Figure 7. Two-way interactions between sex and race/ethnicity for SPT overall (SPT) and within areas of racism (SPT-RACISM) and classism (SPT-CLASSISM).
Is adolescents’ social awareness related to their perspective taking in contexts of social justice?

There was a strong correlation between adolescents’ social awareness of problems of social justice (AWARE) and their perspective taking (SPT) overall \( (r = .41, p < .001) \) and within each of the three areas of social justice: racism \( (r = .30, p = .003) \), sexism \( (r = .35, p < .001) \), and classism \( (r = .27, p = .007) \) (See Table 10). However, this relationship varied across grade and SES, qualifying the overall finding and highlighting the role of adolescents’ social location in consolidating their understandings of social justice.

With respect to grade, among Grade 9 adolescents, AWARE and SPT were not related overall \( (r = .07, p = .615) \) or within any area of social justice. Among Grade 12 adolescents, AWARE and SPT were related overall \( (r = .34, p = .016) \), but this association only held in the area of sexism \( (r = .34, p = .015) \) and not in the areas of racism \( (r = .22, p = .12) \) or classism \( (r = .14, p = .35) \). With respect to SES, among adolescents attending lower SES schools, there was no relationship between AWARE and SPT overall \( (r = .23, p = .10) \) or within any area of social justice. Among those attending higher SES schools, however, quite strong correlations were found between AWARE and SPT overall \( (r = .55, p < .001) \) and within all areas of social justice — racism \( (r = .47, p = .001) \), sexism \( (r = .55, p < .001) \), and classism \( (r = .33, p = .028) \). Thus, adolescents’ awareness of problems of social justice and their social perspective taking were more likely to be associated among Grade 12 participants with higher SES backgrounds than same-aged, lower SES students (See Figure 8).

With regards to sex and race/ethnicity, the relationship between AWARE and SPT was consistent across males \( (r = .40, p = .004) \) and females \( (r = .42, p = .003) \), as well as across adolescents belonging to racial/ethnic majority \( (r = .45, p = .002) \) and minority groups \( (r = .37, p = .008) \).
Table 10. 

*Correlation Coefficients for Social Awareness (AWARE) and Perspective Taking (SPT) Overall and Across Areas of Social Justice.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) AWARE-OVERALL</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.81***</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>.89***</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>.77***</td>
<td>.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) SPT-OVERALL</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.84***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.86***</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.86***</td>
<td>.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) AWARE-RACISM</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.61***</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) SPT-RACISM</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.63***</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.63***</td>
<td>.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) AWARE-SEXISM</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>.58***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) SPT-SEXISM</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) AWARE-CLASSISM</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) SPT-CLASSISM</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*
Figure 8. Correlations between AWARE and SPT overall by adolescents’ grade and SES.
Social Desirability

Social desirability was not related to AWARE ($r = -0.09, p = 0.40$) or SPT ($r = -0.07, p = 0.49$) overall or within any of the three areas of social justice. This suggests that adolescents’ responses on the two social justice measures were not influenced by concerns about self-presentation.

Summary

Results revealed significant variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice. Overall, participants demonstrated a moderate level of social awareness of problems of social justice (AWARE) in contemporary society. They were most aware of problems of classism, followed by racism, and were least aware of sexism. Social perspective taking (SPT) was assessed according to five qualitatively distinct levels, indicating increasingly sophisticated understandings of social group differences. On the whole, participants assumed a largely nominal perspective (Level 3), revealing that they were able to acknowledge the relevance of race, sex and class to understanding the conflicts in the scenarios, but they were also naïve to the disparities that existed between advantaged and disadvantaged social groups as well as the broader implications of inequity. Adolescents’ SPT was most sophisticated in the context of racism, followed by classism, and — like AWARE — least sophisticated in the context of sexism.

Adolescents’ understandings of social justice also varied according to their grade and social location (i.e., sex, race/ethnicity, SES). Predictably, older adolescents showed greater social awareness and engaged in more sophisticated perspective taking than younger adolescents both overall and across areas of social justice. Two-way interactions between grade and SES indicated that age-related effects were considerably larger among higher SES adolescents compared to lower SES participants. While there were significant grade-related increases in SPT overall among both higher SES and lower SES adolescents, there were no grade effects among lower SES participants in the areas of sexism and classism. Furthermore, AWARE and SPT were correlated among older
(particularly in the area of sexism) and higher SES (across all areas) adolescents, but were not related among either younger or lower SES adolescents. Within areas of social justice, it was found that racial/ethnic minorities were more aware of problems of racism than majority adolescents; however, there were no effects of race/ethnicity on perspective taking in this context. There were also trends indicating that females had greater awareness of sexism and more sophisticated perspective taking in the context of sexism than males. Finally, higher SES adolescents demonstrated greater awareness of classism, and there was a trend suggesting that they had more sophisticated perspective taking than lower SES adolescents.

II. Explaining Variability in Adolescents’ Understandings of Social Justice

The following section presents findings corresponding to the second objective of the present study, which was to determine whether variability in adolescents’ critical thinking, moral judgment, and/or empathy could help to account for individual differences in their understandings of social justice.

**Do adolescents’ understandings of social justice vary as a function of their critical thinking, moral judgment, and/or empathy?**

Correlational analyses were first conducted to examine relationships among predictor variables. Moral judgment was related to both critical thinking ($r = .37, p < .001$) and empathy ($r = .22, p = .028$); however, there was no relationship between critical thinking and empathy ($r = -.09, p = .38$).

Partial correlational analyses were then performed to examine the relationship between predictor variables (critical thinking, moral judgment, and empathy) and adolescents’ understandings of social justice (AWARE and SPT), while controlling for the effects of grade (see Table 11). Given that grade effects were observed for outcome variables overall and across all areas of social justice,
Table 11. 
Partial Correlations Between Predictor and Outcome Variables Controlling for the Effects of Grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Awareness (AWARE)</th>
<th>Social Perspective Taking (SPT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Judgment</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05, **p < .01*
grade was controlled in the analyses to determine the unique relationship of each of the predictor variables.

**Critical Thinking.**

There was a trend showing that adolescents with more advanced critical thinking skills had greater overall social awareness of problems of social justice \( (r = .18, p = .080) \). Accounting for this overall trend, adolescents’ critical thinking correlated with their AWARE-CLASSISM \( (r = .23, p = .026) \) but not with their AWARE-RACISM \( (r = .13, p = .22) \) or their AWARE-SEXISM \( (r = .07, p = .50) \). There was no association between adolescents’ critical thinking and their SPT overall \( (r = .17, p = .110) \) or within any of the areas of social justice.

**Moral Judgment.**

Adolescents with more mature moral judgment had greater overall social awareness \( (r = .21, p = .043) \). However, moral judgment was only significantly related to AWARE-CLASSISM \( (r = .29, p = .004) \), and not to either AWARE-RACISM \( (r = .06, p = .58) \) or AWARE-SEXISM \( (r = .15, p = .15) \). Adolescents’ moral judgment was also related to their overall social perspective taking \( (r = .31, p = .002) \). This overall correlation held for SPT-RACISM \( (r = .25, p = .014) \) and SPT-CLASSISM \( (r = .35, p = .001) \), and showed a trend for SPT-SEXISM \( (r = .17, p = .095) \).

**Empathy.**

Adolescents’ level of empathy was not related to their social awareness overall \( (r = .05, p = .65) \) or within any of the three areas of social justice. However, there was a trend towards significance between empathy and social perspective taking overall \( (r = .19, p = .059) \), which was accounted for by a strong correlation in the area of sexism (SPT-SEXISM) \( (r = .29, p = .005) \) but not in the areas of SPT-RACISM \( (r = .06, p = .59) \) or SPT-CLASSISM \( (r = .11, p = .27) \).
What are the models that best predict adolescents’ understandings of social justice overall and within areas of racism, sexism, and classism?

Multiple step-wise regression analyses were conducted to determine which main and two-way interaction effects of grade and social location (i.e., sex, race/ethnicity, SES) variables, as well as cognitive (i.e., moral judgment, critical thinking) and affective (i.e., empathy) variables, best predicted AWARE and SPT overall and within areas of social justice. Stepwise regression is a semi-automatic iterative construction of a regression model where independent variables are subsequently removed from a model if they are not statistically significant. It was an appropriate approach to regression in this instance considering the goal of obtaining parsimonious models of independent variables predicting adolescents’ understandings of social justice and because there was no predetermined order in which variables were to be entered.

Grade and social location variables were included in the regression if there were significant main or interaction effects (or if effects were closely approaching significance) on each of the outcome variables. Moral judgment, critical thinking, and empathy were included in the analyses if they had significant partial correlations, controlling for grade, with each of the outcome variables. Tests to determine whether data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern. See Tables 12 and 13 for regression results for AWARE and SPT respectively.

**Awareness of Problems of Social Justice.**

For AWARE overall, the regression analysis initially included five variables (grade, race/ethnicity, SES, grade X SES, and moral judgment). The model that best predicted AWARE overall included (a) the main effect of grade ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$) and (b) moral judgment ($\beta = .22$, $p = .049$), and was reached in two steps with no variables removed. The model explained 31% of the total variance ($R^2 = .31$, $F (2, 95) = 20.75$, $p < .001$).
Table 12.  
*Regression Models of Predictors of AWARE Overall and Within Areas of Social Justice (95% Confidence Intervals Reported in Parentheses).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE B$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWARE</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.78 (-0.76, 2.32)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .32$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Grade</td>
<td>0.23 (0.11, 0.36)</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Moral Judgment</td>
<td>0.01 (0.00, 0.01)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>$p = .049$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARE-RACISM</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.40 (0.60, 2.20)</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Grade</td>
<td>1.00 (0.61, 1.39)</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>0.42 (0.03, 0.81)</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>$p = .036$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARE-SEXISM</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.71 (1.07, 2.36)</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Grade</td>
<td>1.03 (0.63, 1.44)</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARE-CLASSISM</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.42 (-1.55, 1.83)</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>$p = .87$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Moral Judgment</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01, 0.02)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  For AWARE, $R^2 = .31$. For AWARE-RACISM, $R^2 = .27$. For AWARE-SEXISM, $R^2 = .21$. For AWARE-CLASSISM, $R^2 = .19$. 
Table 13.

Regression Models of Predictors of SPT Overall and Within Areas of Social Justice (95% Confidence Intervals Reported in Parentheses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPT</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.90 (-2.49, 0.70)</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>p = .27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Moral Judgment</td>
<td>0.01 (0.00, 0.02)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>p = .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Grade</td>
<td>0.46 (0.07, 0.85)</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>p = .023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPT-RACISM</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.34 (-2.03, 1.35)</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>p = .69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Moral Judgment</td>
<td>0.01 (0.00, 0.02)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>p = .009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Grade</td>
<td>0.55 (0.13, 0.96)</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>p = .011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPT-SEXISM</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.26 (-0.75, 1.26)</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>p = .62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Grade</td>
<td>0.86 (0.44, 1.28)</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Empathy</td>
<td>0.03 (0.01, 0.04)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>p = .005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPT-CLASSISM</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.26 (-3.30, 0.78)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>p = .22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Moral Judgment</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01, 0.02)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>p = .002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Grade X SES</td>
<td>0.23 (0.00, 0.46)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>p = .046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For SPT, $R^2 = .31$. For SPT-RACISM, $R^2 = .28$. For SPT-SEXISM, $R^2 = .23$. For SPT-CLASSISM, $R^2 = .26$. 
For AWARE-RACISM, the regression included four variables (grade, sex, race/ethnicity, and grade X sex). The best-fitting model comprised the main effects of (a) grade ($\beta = .46, p < .001$), and (b) race/ethnicity ($\beta = .19, p = .036$), and was also reached in two steps with no variables removed. The model accounted for 27% of the variability ($R^2 = .27, F (2, 95) = 17.10, p < .001$).

For AWARE-SEXISM, the regression included four variables (grade, sex, SES, and grade X SES). A model consisting solely of participants’ grade ($\beta = .45, p < .001$) best predicted AWARE-SEXISM, explaining 21% of the variability ($R^2 = .21, F (1, 97) = 25.47, p < .001$).

For AWARE-CLASSISM, the regression included four variables (grade, SES, critical thinking, moral judgment). A model exclusively comprising adolescents’ level of moral judgment ($\beta = .44, p < .001$) best predicted AWARE-CLASSISM, accounting for 19% of the variability ($R^2 = .19, F(1, 97) = 22.55, p < .001$).

**Social Perspective Taking.**

For SPT overall, the regression analysis included seven variables (grade, sex, race/ethnicity, SES, grade X SES, sex X race/ethnicity, and moral judgment). The model that best predicted SPT overall included (a) moral judgment ($\beta = .36, p = .001$) and (b) the main effect of grade ($\beta = .25, p = .023$) and was reached in two steps with no variables removed. The model explained 31% of the total variance ($R^2 = .31, F (2, 95) = 20.58, p < .001$).

For SPT-RACISM, the regression included five variables (grade, sex, race/ethnicity, sex X race/ethnicity, and moral judgment). The best-fitting model also comprised (a) moral judgment ($\beta = .30, p = .009$) and (b) the main effect of grade ($\beta = .29, p = .011$) and was reached in two steps with no variables removed. The model accounted for 28% of the variability ($R^2 = .28, F (2, 95) = 17.76, p < .001$).
For SPT-SEXISM, the regression included five variables (grade, sex, SES, grade x SES, and empathy). The model that best predicted SPT-SEXISM included (a) the main effect of grade ($\beta = .37, p < .001$) and (b) levels of empathy ($\beta = .26, p = .005$), and was reached in two steps with no variables removed. The model explained 23% of the total variance ($R^2 = .23, F(2, 95) = 14.11, p < .001$).

For SPT-CLASSISM, the regression included seven variables (grade, sex, race/ethnicity, SES, grade X SES, sex X race/ethnicity, and moral judgment). The best-fitting model comprised (1) adolescents’ level of moral judgment ($\beta = .35, p = .002$) and (2) the two-way interaction between grade and SES ($\beta = .22, p = .046$) and was reached in two steps with no variables removed. The model explained 26% of the variability in SPT CLASSISM ($R^2 = .26, F(2, 95) = 16.47, p < .001$).

**Summary**

Results showed that the maturity of adolescents’ moral judgments reliably predicted their understandings of social justice. While regression analyses confirmed the strong role of grade in determining adolescents’ AWARE and SPT, moral judgment accounted for a significant proportion of the variability over and above these effects. However, the predictive power of moral judgment varied according to social justice area, having the most influence in the context of classism (predicting both AWARE-CLASSISM and SPT-CLASSISM) and least in the context of sexism (predicting neither AWARE-SEXISM nor SPT-SEXISM). Comparatively, critical thinking had little assertion on adolescents’ AWARE and SPT overall and across areas of social justice. Adolescents’ levels of empathy strongly predicted their social perspective taking in contexts of sexism (SPT-SEXISM), but otherwise had no effect on their understandings of social justice.
DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the present research was to examine variability in two critical features of adolescents’ understandings of social justice. First, this study explored their social awareness of predominant forms of inequity in contemporary Canadian society. As adolescents must now come of age in social worlds encompassing people of many differing social affiliations, an important unanswered question was the extent to which they were conscious of the unbalanced distribution of opportunity, privilege, and affluence among societal groups. Results showed that participants were moderately aware of problems of racism, sexism, and classism, suggesting that Canadian youth, on average, are fairly cognizant of the prevalence of social injustice.

Second, this study examined adolescents’ social perspective taking in contexts depicting these social problems. Adolescents must be able to sufficiently coordinate multiple points of view in order to appreciate social group differences in their interactions with dissimilar others (Selman, 2003; Quintana, 2010). Similar to their overall awareness, participants’ overall level of social perspective taking indicated that they generally assumed what was defined as a “nominal” perspective (Level 3) that tends to oversimplify group disparities. Those adopting this perspective often spoke in politically correct terms and emphasized concerns about ‘equality’ — as opposed to ‘equity’ — between members of opposing races, sexes, and classes. In contrast, adolescents assuming the least sophisticated “interpersonal” perspective (Level 1) were largely ignorant of violations of social justice and social group differences, while those employing a “social group” perspective (Level 5) demonstrated complex understandings of social disparities and recognized broader societal implications of inequity. Torres-Harding, et al. (2012) found that individuals’ interest and commitments towards social justice — as indicated by their beliefs, values and goals related to social justice as well as their participation in social justice-related
activities — revealed their attitudes about the pervasiveness of inequity, including the degree to which they denied the existence of racial discrimination against African-Americans and gender inequalities as well as blamed these marginalized groups for their disadvantages. Therefore, adolescents’ corresponding levels of awareness and perspective taking may indicate the middling degree to which they are, by and large, dedicated towards advocating tenets of social justice.

Some may find these results surprising considering that participants were raised in a society where diversity and tolerance are engrained cultural and educational values (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) and at a time when there has never been greater emphasis on social justice than at any other point in history (Lorenz, 2014). Nevertheless, adolescents’ moderate levels of awareness and perspective taking may be a reflection of growing up in a climate where youth learn to overlook social group differences. For example, consider the existing research on the propagation of “colourblind” ideology (see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2015). Several studies have shown that a colourblind perspective, emphasizing solely commonalities between races/ethnicities to the exclusion of disparities, reduces individuals’ awareness of these group differences as well as their motivation to seek social change (Saguy, et al., 2009; Saguy et al., 2011). Consequently, the naivety that many adolescents demonstrated towards racial/ethnic disparities may seem more logical if youth are socialized to “not see” race, as encouraged by proponents of colourblind ideology (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Pahlke et al., 2012). While acknowledging the noble intent behind instilling youth with colourblind beliefs and principles, Dovidio et al. (2015) argued that colourblindness inadvertently functions as a subtle form of racism as it justifies structural discrimination and dismisses the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities. They noted:

At an individual level, emphasizing colorblindness through commonality may represent a valuable step toward reducing intergroup tensions and developing trust
and intimacy between members of different groups. However, at a fundamental level, adopting this perspective permits the perpetuation of systems that reinforce racial dominance that appear to be fair on the surface but which are actually unjust. Addressing racial inequalities at both the societal- and individual-levels requires being race conscious, not color-blind, to recognize racial disparities and to understand their basis in unfair treatment. Good intentions, if not appropriately informed, are not enough to achieve fairness socially, institutionally, and interpersonally (p.1533).

For participants at this age, colourblind socialization may have constrained their awareness of the ubiquity of racism as well as their social understanding in contexts where racism is conveyed. They also may have learned to employ a similar “blindness” in their dealings with other forms of social inequity, including disparities between sexes and classes. Adolescents’ understandings of social justice were subsequently examined for variability across areas of social justice (i.e., racism, sexism, and classism), as well as grade and features of adolescents’ social locations (i.e., sex, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status), which will now be discussed.

**Social Justice Area: Racism, Sexism, and Classism**

A unique feature of this study was that it investigated adolescents’ understandings of social justice within three distinct areas: racism, sexism, and classism. Results indicated that adolescents’ social awareness and perspective taking varied substantially across these kinds of social problems. First, adolescents were found to be more strongly aware of classism in our society, followed by racism, and then sexism. Their greater awareness of classism may be because economic disparities are more conspicuous than the other two forms of inequity. Youth, particularly those who live in urban environments, are better able to observe the effects of a system that fundamentally divides society into “have’s” and “have not’s” on a regular basis. It is perhaps therefore easier for adolescents to perceive the advantages that affluence provides in terms of resources and opportunities compared to other privileged groups (e.g., White, male, etc.). The adversities faced by the poor (e.g., poverty, poor health outcomes, etc.) may also be more palpable and commonplace compared to the consequences of racism and sexism.
Moreover, many adolescents might regard racism and sexism as largely problems of the past, having been eradicated by the civil rights and feminist movements of earlier generations. Wealth inequality is also a problem that appears to be worsening across North America (e.g., Macdonald, 2014; OECD, 2011) and has recently been prominent in the public consciousness, as evidenced by the recent “Occupy” movements across the globe (Gamson & Sifry, 2013).

Contrary to their awareness of social justice problems, adolescents showed more mature perspective taking in the area of racism than classism and sexism. A plausible explanation of this finding is that inner-city Canadian youth have likely amassed substantial experience interacting with members of diverse races and ethnicities, which has long been established as an important factor in reducing prejudice and increasing positive social relations between children and adolescents belonging to different social groups (e.g., Killen, Mulvey, & Hitti, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). A study by Killen, Kelly, Richardson, Crystal and Ruck (2010) involving White children in the U.S., found that youth with greater amounts of intergroup contact with Black adolescents were more likely to evaluate peer exclusion based on race as wrong, realistically estimate the occurrence of racial exclusion, and refrain from using stereotypic expectations to justify interracial discomfort. Participants may also be able to employ superior social-cognitive skills in contexts of racism having grown up in a diverse Canadian society where multiculturalism is a source of national pride and identity. For the majority of adolescents born in Canada or who have lived here most of their lives, racial/ethnic diversity has been emphasized throughout their development, and may surpass individual social group concerns in social justice contexts (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012). Most adolescents have also internalized that the expression of racial and ethnic prejudices is socially unacceptable (Rutland, Cameron, Milne, & McGeorge, 2005) and are generally more rejecting of race/ethnicity-based exclusion than younger children (Killen et al., 2007).
Research has illustrated that sexism remains pervasive in the lives of adolescent females (e.g., Leaper & Brown, 2008; 2014). Interestingly, however, participants’ awareness and perspective taking were both weakest in the context of sexism, suggesting that adolescents do not see gender-based inequity as prevalent in society as other forms of injustice. Several participants — both male and female — dismissed or rationalized the sexual harassment of the male perpetrator towards the female victim in the ‘sexism’ scenario of the interview. These adolescents characteristically accepted the interaction as an example of typical adolescent male behaviour (e.g., “boys will be boys”) that was not a significant cause for concern (i.e., “not a big deal”). Moreover, they often blamed the female character because of her choice of attire, even though the scenario clearly mentioned that she did not break her school’s dress code. While many adolescents also found fault with the victim in the racism and classism scenarios, participants may have reacted much more flippantly to the sexism scenario. There is evidence to imply that adolescents’ reasoning about sexism differs from how they think about other forms of social justice. For instance, Killen et al., (2002) found that adolescents evaluated gender exclusion as more justifiable than racial exclusion in friendship and peer group contexts. Although it may be cause for concern that many adolescents seemed to regard the sexual harassment depicted in the scenario as the status quo, these findings do not necessarily mean that youth do not consider sexism as problematic, nor can it be said that adolescents are not committed to gender-based equity. Still, the results indicate that adolescents’ primary concerns about social inequity lie elsewhere.

One must also take into account cultural and historical differences while considering variability in awareness and perspective taking across areas of social justice. Although racial discrimination remains a problem in North America, tension among racial/ethnic groups may be higher in the U.S. due to a history of slavery and segregation as well as contentious present-day
issues such as affirmative action and immigration. Prominent in the U.S. media as of late are high-profile cases of police brutality usually involving White police officers against young Black men, sparking protests and increased participation in activist movements like “Black Lives Matter” on college campuses across the country (“The Truth of ‘Black Lives Matter’”, 2015; Von Drehle, 2015). Therefore, the climate of the U.S. surrounding issues of race/ethnicity may produce differences in social awareness and perspective taking in the area of racism among American youth compared to the Canadian sample of the present study. The gravity of social justice concerns will also naturally fluctuate by geographical location as well as over periods of time, making it difficult to fully account for variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice at any given point.

Grade (Age)

As expected, results revealed a clear developmental shift in adolescents’ understandings of social justice. Adolescents in Grade 12 were both more aware of problems of social justice in our society and used more sophisticated social perspective taking in these contexts than Grade 9 adolescents. Consistent with my earlier research (Rubenstein, 2012), with age, participants showed increasingly complex understandings of social group differences and were better able to incorporate societal concerns into their reasoning about social inequity. Furthermore, developmental effects were consistently observed across areas of racism, sexism, and classism. These results indicate that progression in adolescents’ understandings of social justice is an important component of the advanced social-cognitive development that occurs throughout this period (Moshman, 2011). Instigated by rapid advances in cognitive ability (e.g., Case, 1985; 1992; Fischer, 1980), critical thinking (e.g., Stanovich & West, 1997; 2007; West et al., 2008) and moral reasoning (e.g., Gibbs, 2013; Killen & Cooley, 2014; Kohlberg, 1984), adolescents gradually begin to identify themselves as participatory agents of a broader society, who are
capable of contemplating ideas and issues pertaining to the advancement of a “common good” (Smetana & Villalobos, 2009).

Accordingly, later adolescents appear to be able to analyze issues pertaining to social justice in ways that are less common at earlier ages. Development in the sophistication of adolescents’ understandings of social justice is in keeping with existing social-cognitive literature showing significant growth over the course of adolescence in social and ethnic perspective taking (Quintana, 1994; 2010; Selman, 1980; 2003). Selman (1980) demonstrated that the capacity to form a “third-person” perspective (Level 3) in early adolescence, along with immature understandings of intragroup processes, exaggerations of homogeneity and needs for conformity, is generally replaced by a ‘societal’ perspective (Level 4) in later adolescence, resulting in greater respect for individual differences. An appreciation for racial/ethnic diversity emerges as later adolescents become better able to consider the perspectives of those belonging to dissimilar races and ethnicities (Karcher & Fischer, 2004; Quintana, 1994).

Likewise, age-related increases in adolescents’ understandings of social justice are consistent with development in their reasoning about concepts related to social justice, including notions of rights and civil liberties (see Helwig, Ruck & Peterson-Badali, 2014 for review). For example, Helwig (1995, 1997)’s studies of children’s and adolescents’ reasoning about freedom of speech and religion showed that, with age, adolescents were increasingly able to integrate their understandings of these rights with various conflicting moral or social values and concerns (e.g., laws restricting civil liberties, mental and physical competency, social context). Similar progression has been shown to occur throughout adolescence in conceptions of social organization (e.g., Turiel, 1983), political and civic socialization (e.g., Flanagan & Christens, 2011; Helwig, Arnold, Tan, & Boyd, 2007), and tolerance for dissenting views (e.g., Wainryb, Shaw, & Maianu, 1998). The results of the present study suggest that advances in these areas are
often accompanied by greater awareness of the prevalence of social justice as well as the ability to form more complex interpretations of social group differences.

By late adolescence, most youth are also in the midst of the identity formation process, acquiring a unique set of personal beliefs, values, and principles (Kroger, 2007; Moshman, 2011). The development of adolescents’ social awareness and perspective taking in contexts of social justice also seems to coincide with this critical “task” of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Those who have assimilated social justice principles into their personal identities are likely to be more sensitive to the prevalence of inequity and better able to understand competing perspectives in social justice contexts. There is also wide variability in interest and commitment towards social justice by the time individuals reach early adulthood (Miller et al., 2009; Todd et al., 2014). For example, Todd et al. (2014) found that White college students’ social justice interest and commitment was predicted by their attitudes about White privilege, as well as their religious conservatism.

It is also interesting to note that adolescents’ awareness and perspective taking became more congruent with age. Grade 12 adolescents with greater social awareness were also more likely to demonstrate more sophisticated levels of perspective taking; however, this relationship was not found among Grade 9 adolescents. Nevertheless, the overall correlation among Grade 12 adolescents was somewhat qualified as it only held within the area of sexism but not in areas of racism or classism. Older adolescents with greater awareness of the pervasiveness of sexism in society also tended to have more sophisticated social perspective taking in sexism contexts. A potential explanation for this finding is that adolescents may be more exposed to instances of sexism in their daily lives relative to other forms of social injustice. Accordingly, those who are more aware of sexism may also encounter additional perspective taking opportunities in sexism contexts, leading to greater consolidation between their awareness and perspective taking.
Social Location

In addition to the effects of grade, results showed that adolescents’ social locations were also associated with their understandings of social justice. Socioeconomic status was found to be a particularly relevant feature of social location. Adolescents attending lower SES schools appear to be at a significant disadvantage relative to their higher SES counterparts. For example, although lower SES adolescents made significant grade-related increases in perspective taking overall, the effects of grade were not significant among lower SES participants in the areas of sexism and classism. In addition, there were fewer age-related differences in both awareness and perspective taking, which suggests that they make fewer gains over time compared to higher SES adolescents. Moreover, awareness and perspective taking were positively related among higher SES participants, but not among lower SES adolescents.

These findings might be clarified by research exemplifying socioeconomic differences in adolescent civic engagement. Studies have shown that a major gap exists between the civic opportunities of adolescents from advantaged and less-advantaged communities; those with higher SES backgrounds attend schools where there are more classroom-based civic learning opportunities, live in communities with more youth-based organized activities, and are more likely to have higher-educated parents with active interests in political and civic issues (e.g., Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). As a result, higher SES adolescents may be raised in environments that better facilitate growth in awareness of social injustice and maturity in interpretations of social group differences. In contrast, lower SES adolescents may have access to fewer educational and personal resources that promote complex understandings of social justice, thereby restraining the development of their social awareness and perspective taking in these contexts.
Features of adolescents’ social locations, including their race/ethnicity, sex and socioeconomic status, also contributed to variability in social awareness and perspective taking within specific areas of social justice. Racial/ethnic minority adolescents showed greater awareness of racism than majority participants, but not more sophisticated perspective taking. There were also trends indicating that females showed both greater social awareness of problems of sexism and more sophisticated perspective taking in contexts depicting sexism. These results are in keeping with developmental studies highlighting the importance of social group membership on how youth contemplate social justice issues. For example, studies have found that ethnic-minorities and females were more likely to reject interracial and gender-based peer exclusion and judged these forms of exclusion as more wrong than majority and male adolescents respectively (Killen, et al., 2002; Killen, et al., 2007; Killen, Kelly, Richardson, & Jampol, 2010). Quintana (1994, 2010) also discussed how the emergence of a racial/ethnic group consciousness during early to mid-adolescence typically causes resentment among adolescents belonging to ethnic minority groups towards the majority group for their social disadvantages. Leaper and Brown (2008) reported that 90% of U.S. females between the ages of 12 and 18 claimed to experience sexual harassment and that the vast majority experienced sexism pertaining to their academic and athletic abilities, with the probability of victimization steadily increasing over the course of adolescence. Thus, sexism appears to continue to be a significant problem for female adolescents, which may translate to mature awareness and perspective taking in this context.

These findings are also in agreement with the body of research illustrating the critical role that race/ethnicity (e.g., Phinney, 1990; Quintana, 2010) and sex/gender (e.g., Frable, 1997) play in the identity formation process. Given the novel significance that social group membership assumes in adolescence, it is unsurprising that racial/ethnic minority and female adolescents,
belonging to historically marginalized groups, acquire a stronger awareness of inequity as well as more sophisticated understandings of social group disparities. Similarly, group privilege may have been detrimental to majority and male adolescents’ awareness and perspective taking. Adolescent members of advantaged social groups have been found to be more likely to regard their privileges as personal entitlements and justify social group disparities compared to their more vulnerable peers (e.g., Horn, 2003; Wainryb & Turiel, 1994). Furthermore, adolescents affiliated with high-status peer crowds tend to have higher social dominance orientations (Cross & Fletcher, 2011), which is a trait that has been shown to predict prejudice towards members of less privileged out-groups (Sidanius, & Prato, 2012).

Although social group marginalization in this study appeared to be related to adolescents’ understandings of racism and sexism, this pattern did not extend to their understandings of classism. One might have expected that adolescents attending lower SES schools, who are comparably disadvantaged, would show enhanced understandings of classism compared to adolescents with higher SES backgrounds. In fact, the opposite was found to be true; higher SES adolescents were more aware of problems of classism and there was a trend indicating that they had more sophisticated perspective taking in the area of classism. There is evidence that suggests that youth from opposing socioeconomic backgrounds reason about issues related to economic inequality in different ways (Flanagan, et al., 1997; Leahy, 1981; 1983; Sigelman, 2012). Flanagan, et al. (1997) found that inner city American students, in Grades 7 through 12, were more likely to attribute one’s socioeconomic circumstances (i.e., poverty, prosperity) to aspects of the individual (e.g., effort, motivation, academic achievement) than youth living in more affluent suburbs, who were more inclined to cite societal or systemic factors. Moreover, adolescents who offered institutional explanations for poverty and unemployment were less likely to identify society as fair and impartial (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999).
Therefore, sociocentric understandings of classism appear to be linked to the advantages of wealth (e.g., income, education), which give rise to attitudes that promote social justice. In addition, Flanagan and Tucker (1999) proposed that messages about materialism and self-reliance are more salient among low SES adolescents compared to high SES adolescents, who are more likely to have had their material needs met and be supported by their families while transitioning into adulthood. It may also be functional for less affluent adolescents to embrace the ethos that personal attributes, such as hard work and determination, can lead anyone to economic prosperity as it is the primary means through which they believe individuals “like them” can ascend the social hierarchy (Flanagan et al., 2003). Leahy (2003) submitted that low SES adolescents’ use of equity-related characteristics to justify economic inequality supports the notion that children and adolescents are socialized to defend and stabilize the existing class structure of society. Determining what beliefs, values, and environmental influences (e.g., peers, parenting, communities, schools) associated with socioeconomic status contribute to differences in adolescents’ understandings of classism is a valuable objective for future research.

Nevertheless, the results demonstrating variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice according to these aspects of social location must be interpreted with caution. First, it is important to emphasize that the effects of sex on awareness and perspective taking in contexts of sexism both only approached statistical significance. Second, while minority adolescents were more aware of problems of racism than majority adolescents, no race/ethnicity differences were found for perspective taking in the context of racism. Considering the moderate levels of perspective taking in this context overall, this discrepancy suggests that many minority youth lack sophisticated understandings of racial/ethnic disparities to complement their heightened sensitivity to these problems at a societal level. Minority males seem to be particularly at risk for a couple of reasons. First, there were greater age-related differences in
awareness of racism among males compared to females, suggesting that the incongruity between social awareness and perspective taking especially increases with age among male adolescents. Additionally, minority males demonstrated less sophisticated perspective taking in racism and classism contexts than majority males. The opposite effect was observed among female adolescents; minority females had more sophisticated perspective taking in these contexts compared to their majority peers.

Importantly, the effects of race/ethnicity, sex, and SES within specific areas of racism, sexism, and classism, respectively, did not extend to other areas. That is, majority and minority adolescents (race/ethnicity), males and females (sex), and higher and lower SES adolescents all demonstrated similar levels of understanding in areas that were not related to the distinguishing social attribute. Thus, neither group marginalization (in terms of their understandings of racism and sexism) nor privilege (in terms of their understandings of classism) translated to more sophisticated understandings of social justice as a whole. An exception was a trend indicating that minorities had greater awareness overall than majority participants; however there were no race/ethnicity differences within individual areas of sexism and classism. These findings are more in keeping with Selman (1980, 2003) and Quintana (1994) who did not report variability across sex, race/ethnicity or other forms of social categorization in the development of social and ethnic perspective taking.

**Explaining Adolescents’ Understandings of Social Justice: Critical Thinking, Moral Judgment, and Empathy**

The second objective of this research was to examine whether cognitive (i.e., critical thinking, moral judgment), and affective (i.e., empathy) factors may help to account for differences in adolescents’ understandings of social justice. Results showed that moral judgment predicted both adolescents’ awareness and perspective taking, over and above the effects of
grade, implying that maturity in moral judgment is associated with progression in understandings of social justice. Moreover, models including the effects of moral judgment and grade were found to best explain variation in adolescents’ overall awareness and perspective taking. The relationship between adolescents’ moral judgment and their understandings of social justice is reasonable considering that fundamental to the development of these constructs during this period is an upsurge in social consciousness. According to Kohlberg (1981, 1984), a critical feature of advanced moral reasoning (Stage 4), typically only beginning to emerge in later adolescence, is the ability to integrate societal considerations into conceptions of morality, including maintaining law and order as well as fulfilling one’s obligations as a citizen. Whereas emphasis at the previous level (Stage 3) is placed on meeting the expectations of those to whom one cares for and preserving interpersonal relationships, the primary moral duty at Stage 4 is to uphold the prevailing social system as a whole and make decisions about right and wrong while bearing in mind the broader interests of society (Moshman, 2011). Thus, one can appreciate how moral judgment maturity often corresponds with greater awareness of problems of social justice in society as well as superior perspective taking in social justice contexts, reflecting more sophisticated understandings of social group differences.

The relevance of moral judgment to adolescents’ understandings of social justice implies that social-conventional and personal concerns that can inhibit more mature moral judgment may also restrict awareness and perspective taking in contexts of social justice (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2008). For instance, Killen and colleagues found that early adolescents’ reasoning about race- and gender-based peer exclusion tends to be dominated by social conventional and group functioning concerns (e.g., social customs, traditions, authority), frequently overriding concerns about morality (e.g., Horn, 2003; Killen & Cooley, 2014; Killen, et al., 2002). This preoccupation with social conventional issues declines with age, so that later adolescents
emphasize primarily moral concerns in their evaluations of exclusion. Horn (2003) found that younger adolescents judged exclusion based on peer-crowd membership (e.g., nerds, jocks, etc.) as less wrong than older adolescents and were more likely to use social-conventional reasoning to justify exclusion.

Similarly, research has also shown that concerns falling within the personal domain of social knowledge (e.g., privacy, control, choice and preferences, etc.) can substantially influence adolescents’ reasoning about issues related to human welfare. Nucci and Turiel (2009) found that moral action within a morally ambiguous context — i.e., failing to inform another person that they dropped money and keeping it for oneself — followed a U-shaped trajectory from childhood to later adolescence. Middle adolescents were more likely to argue that it was one’s personal right to not inform another person that they dropped money and that keeping the money was not morally wrong, which they attributed to newfound concerns about choice and autonomy. Later adolescents were more likely to make the moral choice (similar to younger children) in these contexts, as they were more competent at coordinating different aspects of complex moral situations. Longitudinal research by Flanagan, Stout, & Gallay (2008) on adolescents’ beliefs about whether governments had the right to interfere with an individuals’ choice to engage in risky behaviours, yielded a similar curvilinear trend to Nucci and Turiel’s (2009), with middle-adolescents more likely to advocate individual free will than early or late adolescents.

Therefore, later adolescents may be better able to perceive the moral implications of inequity, superseding the dictates of social convention and preoccupations with personal autonomy that dominate earlier in adolescence. In this study, participants who cited social-conventional concerns in their evaluations of the conflicts, such as the friendship between the characters, were scored as partaking in less sophisticated forms of perspective taking. Others were assigned lower perspective taking scores if their reasoning stressed personal concerns. For
example, in the ‘sexism’ scenario, several adolescents talked about how it was the female protagonist’s “right” to wear whatever attire she desired to school — so long as she didn’t break the rules — as opposed to highlighting the objectification of the female by the male perpetrator.

It is also noteworthy, however, that there were differences across social justice areas that temper the overall relationship between adolescents’ moral judgment and their understandings of social justice. Classism was the only area in which moral judgment predicted both awareness and perspective taking while controlling for grade. Furthermore, moral judgment explained a sizeable amount of variability in awareness and perspective taking in this context. In the area of racism, moral judgment was related to perspective taking but not awareness, while in the area of sexism, moral judgment was associated with neither construct. A potential explanation for this variability may be that adolescents perceive problems of classism as more morally complex relative to problems of racism and sexism. Research has shown that children begin to cite equity-related factors (e.g., intelligence, ability, effort) over sociocentric factors (e.g., job status, education, luck) to account for wealth and poverty beginning at around 10 years of age (Sigelman, 2012). If adolescents believe that economic prosperity stems from attributes of the individual, they might be more willing to regard wealth inequality as a “fair” social outcome (i.e., “if you are poor, it is your own fault”) or justify the disadvantages of the less affluent. Those who tend to exhibit mature moral judgment — i.e., from the perspective of society as a whole — may be more likely to recognize the influence of sociocentric factors on socioeconomic disparities, which may facilitate greater awareness of problems of classism as well as sophisticated perspective taking in these contexts.

In contrast, adolescents’ level of moral judgment may not have predicted their understandings of racism and sexism as strongly as classism because they perceive race and sex differently than social class. As opposed to socioeconomic status, race and sex are biological
attributes that cannot be justified using equity-related or socio-centric factors. Youth who employ less mature moral judgment may be more capable of having sophisticated understandings of racism and sexism compared to classism. Moral judgment may have also predicted perspective taking, but not awareness, within the area of racism because adolescents encountered considerable ambiguity in the racism scenario of the social justice interview. Several participants noted that the Black character escalated the altercation by first broaching the topic of race, thereby provoking the racial slur from White character. Adolescents with mature moral judgment may have been able to overlook this detail and thus make more sophisticated interpretations of the conflict.

Unlike moral judgment, critical thinking and empathy predicted neither overall awareness nor perspective taking in contexts of social justice. Considering that critical thinking is a central feature of adolescent cognitive development (Stanovich & West, 1997; 2007), one might have assumed that youth who were better able to think critically would have more sophisticated understandings of social justice. However, critical thinking was only related to participants' awareness of classism. Similarly, while empathy has been shown to be a crucial affective determinant of social judgment and behaviour (Davis & Maitner, 2009; Hoffman, 2000; 2008), it only correlated with perspective taking in the context of sexism. This finding can be understood in light of the trend that was found indicating that females had more sophisticated perspective taking in the context of sexism than males. Given that female participants also demonstrated higher levels of empathy —consistent with previous studies (e.g., Van Der Graaff et al., 2014)— it is unsurprising that there would be a relationship between empathy and perspective taking in this context. Thus, it appears that adolescents' levels of critical thinking and empathy have minimal relation to their understandings of social justice.
Limitations

The present study offers valuable insight into adolescents’ understandings of social justice; however, there are several limitations that restrict the interpretability of these results. First, participants were not screened for level of intellectual functioning nor did the study include a thorough assessment of their language skills. Although the sample possessed an appropriate understanding of conversational English, approximately 30% of participants had spent less than half their lives in Canada and, for many, English was not their primary language. Given that performance on the social justice interview was contingent on participants’ verbal production, variability in adolescents’ social perspective taking may have been affected by differences in verbal reasoning and oral expression capacities. It is important that future studies incorporating qualitative methods to investigate adolescents’ understandings of social justice take additional steps to control for cognitive ability and language demands.

In addition, one might question the comparability of the three scenarios in the social justice interview. Although effort was made to ensure that the scenarios were realistic depictions of racism, sexism, and classism in typical adolescent exchanges, the significance of the scenarios may have varied. For example, differences in perspective taking across areas of social justice may have resulted because the depictions of sexism (i.e., a male commenting inappropriately about a female’s body) and classism (i.e., an adolescent from more affluent background teasing a less-affluent peer) did not rival the intensity of the racial slur (i.e., the “N-word”) made by the White adolescent to the Black adolescent. While there was no evidence of this during pilot testing, this problem could have been avoided by using either a subtler example of racial bigotry in the racism scenario or more graphic or blatant examples of harassment or discrimination in the sexism and classism scenarios.
Finally, the limited diversity of the sample suggests that one must be careful while generalizing findings to other adolescent populations. For example, the sample did not allow for examining variability among specific racial/ethnic minority groups. Youth belonging to some minority groups may have different sensitivities to social injustice as well as respond differently when confronted by inequity compared to other minorities, as a result of varying cultural norms and conventions, histories of oppression, personal experiences with injustice, and senses of racial/ethnic identity. In addition, minority participants who did not self-identify as “Black” may have had more difficulty identifying with the slur used in the ‘racism’ scenario. Further analyses are needed to examine individual differences in social awareness and perspective taking within specific ethnic minority groups.

The sample also consisted of students attending exclusively urban schools who have likely amassed substantial intergroup contact, which is critical for countering negative stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Aboud & Brown, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Thus, it may have been advantageous to include adolescents who may interact with members of different social groups less frequently, such as those attending private schools as well as schools in rural areas. Future studies may also want to confirm whether the apparent benefits associated with socioeconomic status illustrated in this study are sustained among private school students, who typically come from exceptionally high SES backgrounds. Sensitivity concerns also prevented participants from being asked questions related to their family’s economic situation. Consequently, adolescents were not divided according to social class as precisely as would have been ideal.

Educational and Clinical Implications

These findings have significant implications for educators and school officials. Aiming to enhance adolescents’ understandings of social justice by fostering their social awareness and
perspective taking may be an important means of advancing intergroup relations. This study demonstrated that adolescents who are able to contemplate issues of racism, sexism, and classism from a broader societal perspective—who are both aware of the prevalence of these problems in society and possess a mature understanding of social group differences—may be better equipped in their dealings with dissimilar others. However, adolescents exhibited only a moderate awareness of social justice problems and were typically naïve to disparities between social groups, which, as discussed earlier, may be related to the proliferation of “colourblind” ideology.

Several researchers have advocated for racially informed decision-making at all levels of educational policy and practice (Ross & Bondy, 2013; Schofield, 2007; Tarca, 2005). Proponents of race-conscious schooling argue that colourblind discourse implicitly and explicitly reinforces stereotyped explanations for discrepancies in educational achievement and behaviour that disparage individuals and their families rather than systemic factors, such as economic disparities, lower quality education, and unequal access to adequate health care (Ross & Bondy, 2013). When race is not addressed in the school environment, it also sends a message to youth that the racial/ethnic differences that they encounter in their everyday lives are unimportant, taboo, and cannot be improved (Tarca, 2005).

The findings of this study encourage schools to not refrain from highlighting the differences that historically have existed and remain between opposing social groups. While adolescents should regard and treat everyone as “equals”, as was reflected by the emphasis on “evenhandedness” in many adolescents’ interviews, it is also vital that they understand that people are not all balanced in terms of privilege and vulnerability. Rather, youth must come to understand that stratification by race, sex, and social class, is fundamental to the existing structure of our society. Acknowledging social differences in our schools — instead of pretending they don’t exist — may be critical for imparting youth with a greater appreciation for
social justice. To foster mature moral decision-making and behaviour in contexts of social justice, adolescents must be able to securely “step outside” of their own social locations and consider others’ points of view. Those who employ sophisticated perspective taking in these situations may be less likely to use stereotypes and hold prejudices about dissimilar others (e.g., Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Quintana, 1994; 2010).

Accordingly, the classroom is an ideal setting to have adolescents think about and openly discuss inequity. Results promote the development of educational tools that enhance awareness of problems of social justice and the ability to contemplate perspectives of individuals belonging to conflicting social groups. For example, having students debate scenarios depicting examples of social inequity in everyday peer interactions offers excellent opportunities for inquiry-based learning (e.g., Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007) by allowing them to construct their own understandings of societal privilege and marginalization as well as facilitating problem solving and critical thinking in these contexts. Similarly, educators may want to assign adolescents from dissimilar social locations to work collaboratively on projects related to issues of social justice in order to initiate meaningful dialogue and perspective taking. Drama-based activities are also a potentially valuable method of encouraging adolescents to identify and assume the perspectives of different others. Regardless of approach, it is critical that schools create a caring and inclusive learning environment that is conducive to peaceful discourse about social differences in addition to a culture that resolutely embraces tolerance and diversity (Nucci, 2001).

In recent decades, there has been a substantial increase in emphasis on social justice education and a call to integrate issues concerning social diversity in academic curricula across the continent (e.g., Adams, et al., 2007). Efforts to provide adolescents residing in lower SES neighbourhoods with additional resources and opportunities to deliberate matters of social justice may be necessary since the development of their awareness and perspective taking appears to be
more constrained and less coherent relative to higher SES adolescents. Seeing that adolescents’ understandings of sexism were less mature than their understandings of classism and racism, educators may also want to particularly focus on issues of gender equality and sexual harassment.

The results may also provide important insight into marginalized adolescents’ attitudes and beliefs about the educational system. For example, if racial/ethnic minorities are particularly aware of the pervasiveness of racism and more sensitive to the disparities that exist between race/ethnic groups, they may be more inclined to regard schools as vehicles of institutional oppression. Some adolescents may place less importance on their schooling, at least in part, because they perceive that there is little benefit to do so in a system where the odds are “stacked” against their success. Ogbu (2008) argued that many Black youth in the United States have adopted an oppositional culture towards education in response to larger societal discrimination, which contributes to poorer academic outcomes among this population. One might also consider how female adolescents’ understandings of sexism influence their functioning in the school environment as well as their academic and vocational goals. Dei (1996; 2010) has discussed how race, sex, social class, among other forms of social difference, intersect to shape disadvantaged students’ experiences of inequity within educational systems in North America. Therefore, the extent to which schools bear in mind adolescents’ understandings of social justice may be integral for engaging those belonging to marginalized social groups. In addition, results suggest that adolescents’ understandings of social justice may be important indicators of social and psychological adjustment. For example, clinicians may want to be mindful of racial/ethnic minority adolescents who are particularly aware of the prevalence of racism but lack sophisticated social perspective taking in their interactions, as they may be at greater risk of harbouring anti-Majority (i.e., anti-White) attitudes, which has been associated with lower
academic achievement (Cokley & Chapman, 2008) and increased problem behaviours at school (Gardener-Kitt, 2005).

Clinical interventions that aim to foster adolescents’ understandings of social justice may also lead to greater tolerance and harmony among youth belonging to dissimilar social groups. Intergroup contact has been found to be consistently less effective at reducing out-group prejudice among racial/ethnic-minorities, who are motivated to discuss the role of power in intergroup relations (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). The “common in-group identity model” (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012) posits that clinicians must cultivate a common “superordinate” identity among members of different groups based on shared aims and characteristics to simultaneously co-exist with separate group identities. Contrasted with a “single common group identity”, which perpetuates colorblind ideology, promoting dual superordinate and separate group identities involves encouraging youth to be conscious of group differences while at the same time challenging traditional social categorization processes that fuel stereotyping and in-group bias (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2015).

Clinicians must also be conscious of the dynamics surrounding the social locations of their adolescent clients and bear in mind the challenges they encounter (or are likely to encounter) due to their social group memberships. It is essential that they consider how adolescents’ race, sex, social class (among many other characteristics) become increasingly pivotal to their sense of self, relationships and perspectives on society at large. Likewise, it may be helpful to contemplate adolescents’ developing understandings of social justice as they relate to their young clients’ psychological and interpersonal difficulties. For example, adolescents who possess a strong awareness of problems of social justice but immature perspective taking may encounter higher levels of inner conflict and struggle in their interactions with different groups. Clinicians also need to be cognizant of their own social locations and constantly monitor
personal biases that may impede treatment with clients belonging to disparate social groups. As in other relationships, it is critical to acknowledge and discuss social group differences as they arise. Not doing so may be detrimental to the therapeutic relationship — rapport will be difficult to establish and sustain with adolescents who sense that their clinicians do not understand or empathize with their social position and worldview.

Finally, this research enhances both educators’ and clinicians’ comprehension of how adolescents understand problems of social justice, which can then be used to relate these issues to them more effectively, according to the sophistication of their understandings.

**Implications for Future Research**

The opportunities for future research in the area of adolescents’ understandings of social justice are vast. Of particular importance is the challenge of determining how adolescents’ social awareness and perspective taking translate to real-life behaviour. Do those with more sophisticated understandings of social justice engage in conduct that demonstrates commitments to equity? Specifically, it will be imperative to examine the impact of adolescents’ understandings of social justice on their interactions and relationships with members of opposing social groups. Marginalized adolescents with greater awareness but poorer perspective taking may bring increased hostility to their dealings with advantaged others. One might also investigate how adolescents belonging to more powerful social groups come to terms with their privilege and integrate their understandings of social justice into their everyday social experiences.

Individuals capable of mature moral judgment do not inevitably act morally in their daily lives (e.g., Walker, 2004). Blasi (2004) has argued that moral action depends on the degree to which one has constructed a moral identity or integrated moral ideals and concerns into his or her sense of self. Furthermore, adolescent moral exemplars are more likely to employ moral traits
and goals to describe themselves relative to comparison adolescents (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Reimer, DeWitt Goudelock, & Walker, 2009). Given the relationship between adolescents’ moral judgment and their overall understandings of social justice, young people’s commitments to social justice may largely depend on the personal meaning and sense of obligation that they ascribe towards realizing the fair distribution of resources and influence among all members of society.

More research is also needed to determine what additional factors affect variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice. Studies have shown that children and adolescents with advanced social perspective taking capacities do not necessarily have higher levels of social functioning (e.g., Selman, 1976; Selman & Adalbjarnardottir, 2000). Originally conceptualized by Selman (1980) as a social cognitive skill, social perspective taking is also a multidimensional construct that is determined by various motivational, emotional and contextual influences (see Gehlbach, 2004). Researchers have also found that features of adolescent social cognitive development such as intergroup understanding (Karcher & Fischer, 2004) and notions of rights and civil liberties (e.g., Helwig, 1995; Ruck, Abramovich, & Keating, 1998) are strongly determined by situational demands. Future studies may want to examine the association between adolescents’ social awareness and perspective taking in contexts of social justice and various environmental factors such as peer relationships, educational and community resources, parenting styles, and familial characteristics. Important questions also remain regarding variability in adolescents’ understandings of social justice among diverse populations (e.g., specific racial/ethnic minority groups, LGBT youth, religious groups) and across other contentious social justice issues (e.g., homophobia, ageism, ableism, religious discrimination, marginalization of First Nations communities). Finally, it would be beneficial to study adolescents’ understandings of social justice as they relate to important markers of psychosocial
adjustment, including academic achievement, delinquency, physical / relational aggression (e.g., bullying) and internalizing behaviours (e.g., anxiety, depression, self-harm).

In response to recent appeals to investigate sociomoral development from a social justice perspective (e.g., Killen & Smetana, 2010), the present study was an attempt to examine how adolescents’ think about and appreciate problems of social justice and social group differences. The findings of this research are a meaningful contribution to the developmental literature as they highlight the importance of nurturing adolescents’ understandings of social justice to the proliferation of attitudes and behaviours that promote equity and equality. Moreover, these findings advance our knowledge of the means through which contemporary youth come to navigate their increasingly diverse and multifaceted social worlds.
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Association for Canadian Studies. (2013). Probing Prejudice: A Groundbreaking Study On Place, Frequency, and Sources. Montreal, QC.


APPENDICES

A. Parent/Guardian and Youth Consent Forms
B. Demographic Questionnaire for Participants
C. Beliefs About the Social World Inventory
D. Perspectives on Social Diversity Interview
E. Actively Open-minded Thinking Composite (AOT; Stanovich & West, 1997)
F. Sociomoral Reflection Measure - Short Form (SRM-SF; Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992).
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I. Two-way Interaction Cell Means for Awareness (AWARE)
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APPENDIX A

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We are researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto presently studying adolescents’ social awareness and understanding in contexts of social justice. More specifically, we are interested in exploring adolescents’ perspectives on a range of contemporary social issues, such as racism, sexism, and classism. We would like to invite your son or daughter to participate in this study.

The study will be conducted in two parts. In Part 1, students will be asked to complete a set of group-administered, written questionnaires. These consist of a short demographics questionnaire, an inventory of beliefs about the social world, and standardized assessments of sociomoral reasoning, critical thinking, and empathy. Part 2 consists of a follow-up, one-on-one session with a skilled graduate student. At this time, students will be asked to complete and discuss a short relational-values task, discuss their perspectives on three hypothetical situations of adolescent peer interactions, and provide a narrative reflection on an experience of human diversity. They will also be asked to complete a brief index of social desirability. As is typical of research of this nature, at the end of this session they will be debriefed about the purpose of our research, and they will have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about it. With your permission, students’ responses in Part 2 will be audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Participation will require a total of approximately two hours, one hour for Part 1 (completion of the group-administered questionnaires) and another for Part 2 (the one-on-one session).

Your son’s/daughter’s anonymity and confidentiality will be assured and strictly protected at all times. Participants will be identified solely through an assigned identification number, so names will not appear on any of the research materials. All materials will be kept in a locked cabinet at OISE/UT, and only the Principal Investigator will have direct access to the information used in the study. All data will be destroyed after being fully analyzed.

It is important to note that participation in this study will have no impact on students’ academic standing, and they will not directly benefit from contributing. Participating will, however, encourage students to reflect on a range of important, contemporary social issues. Past research suggests that students will likely find participation an interesting and rewarding experience. Participation is absolutely voluntary, and your son/daughter will be free to answer some questions, but not others, or to withdraw from the study at any time. However, since data will be coded anonymously, results cannot be withdrawn after participating.

This study is supported by the Toronto District School Board, the school’s principal, ................., and your son’s/daughter’s teacher, ................., and it is sponsored by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The researchers intend to disseminate the results of the study at academic conferences and to publish them in psychological and educational journals. As stated above, however, all efforts will be made to guarantee your son’s/daughter’s privacy and confidentiality. A summary of the study’s findings will be available to you on request.
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me either by phone at 416-978-1059 or by email at ml.arnold@utoronto.ca. Specific inquiries about your son’s/daughter’s rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

To indicate whether you will allow your son/daughter to participate in the study, please complete and return the attached form. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

CONSENT FORM

Please indicate below whether you agree to allow your son/daughter to participate in the study, and return this portion of the form to his/her English teacher, Ms. Leigh Thornton.

_____ I DO give permission for my son/daughter __________________ to participate in this study.

_____ I DO give permission to have my son’s/daughter’s responses in the one-on-one session audio-recorded for data analysis purposes.

I understand that my son/daughter’s privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times, and all questionnaires and recordings will be destroyed on completion of the study.

_________________________ ____________________________ ________________
Name of Parent Signature of Parent Date
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR YOUTH (18 +)

Dear Student:

We are researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto presently studying adolescents’ social awareness and understanding in contexts of social justice. More specifically, we are interested in exploring adolescents’ perspectives on a range of contemporary social issues, such as racism, sexism, and classism. We would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The study will be conducted in two parts. In Part 1, students will be asked to complete a set of group-administered, written questionnaires. These consist of a short demographics questionnaire, an inventory of beliefs about the social world, and standardized assessments of sociomoral reasoning, critical thinking, and empathy. Part 2 consists of a follow-up, one-on-one session with a skilled graduate student. At this time, students will be asked to complete and discuss a short relational-values task, discuss your perspectives on three hypothetical situations of adolescent peer interactions, and provide a narrative reflection on an experience of human diversity. You will also be asked to complete a brief index of social desirability. As is typical of research of this nature, at the end of this session you will be debriefed about the purpose of our research, and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about it. With your permission, your responses in Part 2 will be audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Your participation will require a total of approximately two hours, one hour for Part 1 (completion of the group-administered questionnaires) and another for Part 2 (the one-on-one session).

Your privacy or anonymity and confidentiality will be assured and strictly protected at all times. Participants will be identified solely through an assigned identification number, so names will not appear on any of the research materials. All materials will be kept in a locked cabinet at OISE/UT, and only the Principal Investigator will have direct access to the information used in the study. All data will be destroyed after being fully analyzed.

It is important to note that participation in this study will have no impact on students’ academic standing, and you will not directly benefit from contributing. Participating will, however, encourage you to reflect on a range of important, contemporary social issues. Past research suggests that students find participation in studies like this an interesting and rewarding experience. Your participation is absolutely voluntary, and you will be free to answer some questions, but not others, or to withdraw from the study at any time. However, since data will be coded anonymously, results cannot be withdrawn after participating.

This study is supported by the Toronto District School Board, the school’s principal, Ms. Katherine Evans, and your son’s/daughter’s English teacher, Ms. Leigh Thornton, and it is sponsored by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We intend to disseminate the results of the study at academic conferences and to publish them in psychological and educational journals. As stated above, however, all efforts will be made to guarantee your privacy and confidentiality. A summary of the study’s findings will be available to you on request.
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me either by phone at 416-978-1059 or by email at ml.arnold@utoronto.ca. Specific inquiries about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

To indicate whether you would like to participate in the study, please complete and return the attached form. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

YOUTH CONSENT FORM

Please indicate below whether you agree to participate in the study, and return this portion of the form to your English teacher, Ms. Leigh Thornton.

As a youth 18 years of age or over:

_____ I DO give my consent to participate in this study.

_____ I DO give my consent to have my responses in the one-on-one session audio-recorded for data analysis purposes.

I understand that my privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times, and all questionnaires and recordings will be destroyed on completion of the study.

_________________________   ______________________   ______________________
Name of Youth       Signature       Date
APPENDIX B

Demographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you? ___________ What is your date of birth (day/month/year)?:

2. What is your gender?  □ Male  □ Female

3. Do you consider yourself to be …

□ Aboriginal (e.g. Indian, Metis, Innuit)
□ Black (e.g. West Indian, African, African-Canadian)
□ Eastern Asian (e.g. Chinese, Korean, Japanese)
□ Hispanic/Latin-American (e.g. Mexican, Central American, South American)
□ Middle Eastern (e.g. Iranian, Israeli, Palestinian)
□ South Asian (e.g. Pakistani, Sri Lankan, East Indian)
□ Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai)
□ White (e.g. Western European, Eastern European, European-Canadian)
□ Other (specify) _______________________________
□ Mixed (specify) _______________________________

4. In what country were you born? ____________
   a) If born outside Canada, at what age did you move to Canada?
   b) In what country have you lived most of your life?

5. What language(s) do you speak at home?

6. Who do you live with?

7. What is your mother’s (or primary caregiver’s) highest level of education?

□ Completed elementary school (up to Grade 8)
□ Some high school
□ Completed high school
□ Some college or university
□ Completed college or university
8. What is your father’s (or other parent figure’s) highest level of education?

- Completed elementary school (up to Grade 8)
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college or university
- Completed college or university
- Post-university degree

9. What is your mother’s (or primary caregiver’s) employment status right now?

- Not working outside our home
- Working part time
- Working full time

10. What kind of work does she do?

11. What is your father’s (or other parent figure’s) employment status right now?

- Not working outside our home
- Working part time
- Working full time

12. What kind of work does he do?

13. How important is religion to you?

- Not Important
- A little Important
- Important
- Very Important

14. How often do you attend religious services?

- Never
- Only on special holidays
- Several times a year
- Once a week (or more)

15. In the past few years, how often have you had the opportunity to spend time socializing with people from other social and/or cultural backgrounds?

- Never, or very rarely
- Sometimes, but not often
- Fairly often
- All the time
APPENDIX C

My Beliefs about the Social World

We all have different beliefs and opinions about our social world. Listed below are examples of some people’s social beliefs. Please read these beliefs carefully and then circle the number that matches your personal agreement or disagreement with each of them. There are no right or wrong answers here—only personal opinions!

1. In our society, women are paid less than men for the same work.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

2. In our society, getting ahead in life depends very little on the colour of your skin.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

3. In our society, rich people are usually treated more politely than poor people.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

4. In our society, white people have more opportunities than people of other skin colours.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

5. In our society, women are respected and valued just as much as men.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

6. In our society, many people must work at more than one job to make a living.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

7. In our society, people pay more attention to what white people say than to what people of other skin colours say.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

8. In our society, rich people have more money than poor people.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

9. In our society, men and women do not have the same opportunity to be the boss of a large company.  
   - 1 Disagree  
   - 2 Disagree strongly  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   - 6 Agree strongly

10. In our society, white people experience discrimination (unfair
treatment) just as often as people of other skin colours.

11. In our society, welfare programs make it easy to get out of poverty.

12. In our society, women are usually taller than men.

13. In our society, people pay more attention to men than to women, even when they say the same thing.

14. In our society, it is very difficult for people to change the colour of their skin.

15. In our society, rich people can get away with crimes more easily than poor people.

16. In our society, most important decisions are made by white people.

17. In our society, rich and poor people have the same opportunity to go to the best quality schools

18. In our society, many people think men are superior to women

Thank you!
APPENDIX D

Perspectives on Social Diversity Interview

Racism Scenario:

Ralph and Joe know each other well and have worked together on several projects. Ralph is Black, and Joe is White. One day before class they get into a heated discussion of a current political issue. After some sharp exchanges, Ralph says to Joe, “Of course you won’t get it- you’re White!” In angry response, Joe uses the “N” word to refer to Ralph.

Sexism Scenario:

Jane and John have been classmates throughout high school. One warm spring day, Jane comes to class dressed in a way that stretches, but does not break, the school’s dress code. John starts teasing her and comments on her body parts saying, “Hey, I’d like to see more!” In response, Jane gets upset and accuses him of being a pig.

Classism Scenario:

Jill and Amy have always got along well in the past. Jill’s parents are both lawyers, and Amy’s parents work in lower-paying factory jobs. One day before class Jill jokingly says to Amy, “I like your sweater. Looks like something our housekeeper would wear!” In response, Amy gets upset and calls Jill a spoiled “rich kid”. Jill replies, “What’s your problem?”
Appendix D (continued)

Interview Questions:

1) What is the problem here? Why is that a problem?

2) Now I would like you to think about the problem from ____’s point of view:
   a) How do you think ______ understands what has happened? Why would he/she think this way?
   b) How do you think ______ feels emotionally? Why does he/she feel that way?

3) Now I would like you to think about the problem from ____’s point of view:
   a) How do you think ______ understands what has happened? Why would he/she think this way?
   b) How do you think ______ feels emotionally? Why does he/she feel that way?

4) Let’s imagine that you observe this situation between two of your classmates:
   a) What, if anything, would you do?
   b) What is the ideal (best) solution to the situation?
   c) Is either person more to blame (or at fault) than the other? Why?
   d) Is this a big deal (to you)?

Examples of Probes for Racism Scenario:

a) What does Ralph mean when he says, “Of course you won’t get it - you’re white!”? Why would Ralph say this?
b) How appropriate was Ralph’s reaction to the problem? Why? What might he have done differently?
c) Some people would say that Joe’s reaction was warranted after Ralph’s initial comment, but others would say that Joe did something much worse. What do you think?

Examples of Probes for Sexism Scenario:

a) Why does Jane become upset from John’s comment? Why do you think John would say such a thing to Jane?
b) How appropriate was Jane’s reaction to the problem? Why? What might he have done differently?
c) Some people would say that John’s comments were inappropriate, while others would say that Jane was looking for attention based on her clothing. What do you think?
Appendix D (continued)

*Examples of Probes for Classism Scenario:*

a) Why did Amy call Jill a “spoiled rich kid”?
b) How appropriate was Amy’s reaction to the problem? Why or Why not? What should Amy have done differently?
c) Some people would say that Jill’s comments were insensitive, while others would say that Amy was overacting. What do you think?
APPENDIX E

Thinking Dispositions Questionnaire

Below are a series of sentences. First, read each sentence. Then, decide whether you agree or disagree with each sentence. Circle the choice that best describes your opinion.

1. Changing your mind is a sign of weakness.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

2. There are basically two kinds of people in this world, good and bad.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

3. A person should always consider new possibilities.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

4. It is a noble thing when someone holds the same beliefs as their parents.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

5. If I think longer about a problem I will be more likely to solve it.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

6. I think there are many wrong ways, but only one right way, to almost anything.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |

7. Often, when people criticize me, they don’t have their facts straight.

   | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |
   | Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |
8. No one can talk me out of something I know is right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

9. Considering too many different opinions often leads to bad decisions.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
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<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10. Right and wrong never change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. A person of good character usually does what he or she is told to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
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</table>

12. Beliefs should always be revised in response to new information or evidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

13. I always obey rules even if I probably won't get caught.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. I can't enjoy the company of people who don't share my moral values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. My blood boils over whenever a person stubbornly refuses to admit that he or she is wrong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. There is nothing wrong with being undecided about many issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. It makes me happy and proud when someone famous holds the same beliefs that I do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Good teachers never let you leave the classroom with doubts about the subject matter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Most people just don’t know what’s good for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Coming to decisions quickly is a sign of wisdom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you!
APPENDIX F

SOCIAL REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

In this questionnaire, we want to find out about the things you think are important for people to do, and especially why you think those things (like keeping a promise) are important.

Please help us try to understand your thinking by WRITING AS MUCH AS YOU CAN TO EXPLAIN – EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO WRITE OUT YOUR EXPLANATION MORE THAN ONCE. Don’t just write “same as before.”

If you can explain better or use different words to show what you mean, that helps us even more.

Please answer all the questions, especially the “why” questions. If you need to, feel free to use the space in the margins to finish writing your answers.
1. Think about when you’ve made a promise to a friend of yours. How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, to friends?

Circle one: very important  important  not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2. What about keeping a promise to anyone? How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, to someone they hardly know?

Circle one: very important  important  not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. How about keeping a promise to a child? How important is it for parents to keep promises, if they can, to their children?

Circle one: very important  important  not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
4. In general, how important is it for people to tell the truth?

Circle one:    very important                     important                     not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. Think about when you’ve helped your mother or father. How important is it for children to help their parents?

Circle one:    very important                     important                     not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. Let’s say a friend of yours needs help and may even die, and you’re the only person who can save him or her. How important is it for a person (without losing his or her own life) to save the life of a friend?

Circle one:    very important                     important                     not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
7. What about saving the life of anyone? How important is it for a person (without losing his or her own life) to save the life of a stranger?

Circle one: very important   important   not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

8. How important is it for a person to live even if that person doesn’t want to?

Circle one: very important   important   not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

9. How important is it for people to not take things that belong to other people?

Circle one: very important   important   not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________


10. How important is it for people to obey the law?

Circle one: very important  important  not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

11. How important is it for judges to send people who break the law to jail?

Circle one: very important  important  not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT (WHICHEVER YOU CIRCLED)?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you!
APPENDIX G

**Social Reactions Questionnaire**

The following statements describe thoughts and feelings in a variety of social situations. Please indicate how well each item describes *you* by choosing the appropriate number. 

**Read each item carefully before responding.** Answer as honestly as you can.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I often have caring, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy’s” point of view.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In emergency situations, I feel nervous and uncomfortable.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I am usually objective (unaffected) when I watch a movie or play, and I don’t often get completely caught up in it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t Describe Me Well</td>
<td>Describes Me Well</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
8. I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
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</table>

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.  

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</table>

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.  

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</table>

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.  

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</table>

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.  

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<th>4</th>
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</table>

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.  

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</table>

14. Other people’s misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.  

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</table>

15. If I’m sure I’m right about something, I don’t waste much time listening to other people’s arguments.  

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</tbody>
</table>
16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I was one of the characters.

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don’t feel very sorry for them.

19. I am usually pretty good at dealing with emergencies.

20. I am often quite emotionally affected by things that I see happen.

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.

22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of the leading character.
24. I tend to lose control during emergencies.

          Doesn’t Describe
          Me Well                      Describes
          Me Well

25. When I’m upset with someone, I usually try to “put myself in their shoes” for a while.

          Doesn’t Describe
          Me Well                      Describes
          Me Well

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.

          Doesn’t Describe
          Me Well                      Describes
          Me Well

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I fall apart.

          Doesn’t Describe
          Me Well                      Describes
          Me Well

28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I was in their place.

          Doesn’t Describe
          Me Well                      Describes
          Me Well

**Thank you!**
APPENDIX H

Personal Reaction Inventory
Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and characteristics. Please read each item and circle whether the statement is TRUE or FALSE as it relates to you personally.

1. It is sometimes hard for me to do my homework if I am not feeling up to it. TRUE or FALSE

2. I sometimes feel resentful when I don’t get my way. TRUE or FALSE

3. There have been times when I felt like disobeying my parents even though I knew they were right. TRUE or FALSE

4. No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener. TRUE or FALSE

5. Sometimes I say things just to impress my friends. TRUE or FALSE

6. I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake. TRUE or FALSE

7. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget. TRUE or FALSE

8. I am always polite even to people who are not very nice. TRUE or FALSE

9. I have never been bothered when people expressed ideas very different from my own. TRUE or FALSE

10. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good luck some people have. TRUE or FALSE

11. It sometimes upsets me when people ask me to do things for them. TRUE or FALSE

12. I have never said something on purpose to hurt someone’s feelings. TRUE or FALSE
APPENDIX I

Mean Awareness Scores by Grade and SES (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AWARE</th>
<th>AWARE-SEXISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>3.26 (0.80)</td>
<td>3.93 (0.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>3.12 (0.88)</td>
<td>4.36 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.66 (0.88)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean AWARE-RACISM Scores by Grade and Sex (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
<td>(1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.54 (1.20)</td>
<td>3.58 (0.99)</td>
<td>3.56 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX J

### Mean SPT, SPT-SEXISM, and SPT-CLASSISM Scores by Grade and SES (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>SPT Grade 9</th>
<th>SPT Grade 12</th>
<th>SPT-SEXISM Grade 9</th>
<th>SPT-SEXISM Grade 12</th>
<th>SPT-CLASSISM Grade 9</th>
<th>SPT-CLASSISM Grade 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2.65 (0.80)</td>
<td>3.10 (0.86)</td>
<td>2.58 (1.06)</td>
<td>2.96 (1.23)</td>
<td>2.67 (0.92)</td>
<td>2.93 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>2.36 (0.60)</td>
<td>3.77 (0.79)</td>
<td>2.00 (0.78)</td>
<td>3.55 (1.01)</td>
<td>2.46 (0.93)</td>
<td>3.91 (0.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.96 (0.92)</td>
<td>2.76 (1.16)</td>
<td>2.97 (1.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mean SPT, SPT-RACISM, SPT-CLASSISM Scores by Sex and Race/Ethnicity (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>3.07 (1.15)</td>
<td>2.85 (0.84)</td>
<td>3.39 (1.20)</td>
<td>3.00 (0.90)</td>
<td>3.17 (1.37)</td>
<td>2.74 (1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>2.79 (0.89)</td>
<td>3.15 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.07 (0.81)</td>
<td>3.27 (0.88)</td>
<td>2.79 (1.13)</td>
<td>3.23 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.96 (0.92)</td>
<td>3.18 (0.95)</td>
<td>2.97 (1.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>