ASSESSING BULLYING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH A NEW ONLINE SURVEY: APPLYING THE SOCIAL NORMS MODEL TO ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE

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Abstract
A new online survey has been developed for use in assessing bullying in secondary schools and for conducting social norms interventions. The survey reveals attitudes about bullying, incidence levels of bullying behavior as reported by perpetrators and victims in various school contexts and also assesses perceived norms among peers regarding these attitudes, bullying behavior, and experiences as victims. Included are several types of physical and emotional harm that adolescents experience. Although bullying is substantial, it is not the norm. The most common (and erroneous) perception, however, is that the majority engage in and support such behavior. Furthermore, students underestimate support among peers for reporting bullying behavior to teachers and administrators. These misperceptions thus enable the bullying behavior that does occur.
Example Results

The data provided below are some example results from the “Survey of Bullying at Your School” conducted anonymously in a large middle school (grades 6-8) in the Eastern United States with 578 respondents. These results demonstrate the pattern of misperceived norms commonly found when researching various problem behavior topics, specifically, the tendency to erroneously perceive the problem behavior as the norm. Bullying behaviors and attitudes supporting bullying are a significant problem, but such behaviors and attitudes do not reflect the majority of students. Many students think the majority engage in and support bullying, however, creating a climate where bullying by a minority of individuals can continue as most other students become resigned to thinking it is normal.

Behavioral Norms and Misperceptions about Bullying

NOT bullying another student during the last 30 days was the norm:

- 74% DID NOT push, shove, hit, kick, pull hair, or trip another student;
- 63% DID NOT engage in teasing other students in an unfriendly way;
- 75% DID NOT exclude someone from a group to make them feel bad;
- 89% DID NOT take or damage someone else’s belongings;
- 83% DID NOT spread unkind stories or rumors about another student;
- 81% DID NOT threaten to hurt another student.

In contrast, bullying in the last 30 days was widely MISPERCEIVED to be the norm:

- 83% thought most other students had pushed, shoved, hit, kicked, pulled hair, or tripped others;
- 83% thought most other students had engaged in teasing other students in an unfriendly way;
- 79% thought most other students had excluded someone from a group to make them feel bad;
- 71% thought most other students had taken or damaged someone else’s belongings;
- 78% thought most other students had spread unkind stories or rumors about another student;
- 75% thought most other students had threatened to hurt another student.
Attitudinal Norms and Misperceptions about Bullying

Most students personally believed one should tell adults if they or someone else were being bullied at school:

- 58% thought students SHOULD TELL a principal;
- 74% thought students SHOULD TELL a teacher or counselor;
- 69% thought students SHOULD TELL a parent or other adult relative.

In contrast, this support for telling adults about bullying was widely MISPEREIVED as not the norm among peers:

- 61% thought most other students would not say you should tell a principal;
- 52% thought most other students would not say you should tell a teacher or counselor;
- 59% thought most other students would not say you should tell a parent or other adult relative.

Most students (58%) strongly agreed that “students should always try to be friendly with students who are different from themselves” and fully 91% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

In contrast, 81% MISPEREIVED the attitudinal norm among peers regarding this statement. They thought most other students would answer with less than strong agreement. More than one-third of students (36%) incorrectly thought the majority of their peers would disagree or disagree strongly with this statement about being friendly.
Social Norms Surveys Online
Alcohol Education Project
Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY 14456
http://alcohol.hws.edu

Funding for the development of this survey was provided in full through a grant by the New Jersey Department of Education with funds from the United States Department of Education under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Survey of Bullying at Your School

Page 1 of 4

This is a survey about how students relate to each other. Sometimes students do things that may be called bullying. We want you to tell us about yourself and what you think about other students. You will not be asked to give your name--this is an anonymous survey. Questions that ask about other students are asking about students at your school. Please read each question carefully. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers--just give your best estimate. This survey is voluntary. If you do not wish to answer a question you may leave it blank and continue on.

1. At this school...

   a. I feel that other students care about me
   b. I feel that teachers care about me
   c. I am encouraged to help and respect other students
   d. I don't fit in
   e. Other students look to me to show them how to act
   f. It is easy to make friends here
   g. I can't do much to change bad things that happen here
   h. I am happy here most of the time
   i. Teachers don't really try to stop kids who are bullies

2. During this school year have you ever felt bullied at school?
   (choose one)
   - Never (NOTE: If you answer 'Never' here skip questions 3 and 4 below and go to question 5)

3. How would you describe the person (or persons) who bullied you most?
   (choose one)
   - One boy
   - One girl
   - A group of boys
   - A group of girls
   - A group of boys and girls

   (choose one)
   - Older or mostly older than me
   - About the same age as me
   - Younger or mostly younger than me

   (choose one)
   - Same race or most were same race as me
   - Different race or most were different race than me

4. During this school year have you done any of the things below to get away from a bully at school?
   (Check all that apply)
   - a. Skipped recess or playground time
   - b. Not gone to the bathroom
   - c. Not gone to lunch
   - d. Pretended to be sick and went home
   - e. Avoided a class
   - f. Avoided a hallway
   - g. Avoided some other place in school

5. How often have you skipped school this year because you were afraid of other students hurting you or making fun of you?
   - Never
   - Once
   - 2-3 times
   - 4 or more times

6. On a scale of one to ten, how safe do you feel at school?

(choose one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very threatened</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>
<th>9</th>
<th>Very safe 10</th>
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</table>

7. In the last 30 days how often have the following things happened to you? And how often do you think they have happened to most other students at your school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or tripping...</th>
<th>Not in last 30 days</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>2-3 times</th>
<th>4 or more times</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happened to me</td>
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<td>Happened to most other students at my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Teasing in an unfriendly way...</td>
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<td>c. Being called hurtful names...</td>
<td>Not in last 30 days</td>
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<td>Happened to most other students at my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Being excluded from a group to hurt feelings...</td>
<td>Not in last 30 days</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>2-3 times</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>e. Belongings being taken or damaged...</td>
<td>Not in last 30 days</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>f. Unkind story or rumor spread...</td>
<td>Not in last 30 days</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Survey of Bullying at Your School

8. In the last 30 days how often have you done the following things to another student? And how often do you think most other students have done these things at your school?

a. Pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or tripping...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not in last 30 days</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>2-3 times</th>
<th>4 or more times</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have done it</td>
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<td>Most other students have done it</td>
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</table>

b. Teasing in an unfriendly way...

<table>
<thead>
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</table>

c. Calling hurtful names...

<table>
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d. Excluding someone from a group to make them feel bad...

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e. Taking or damaging someone else’s belongings...

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<tr>
<td>Most other students have done it</td>
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</table>

f. Spreading unkind stories or rumors about someone else...

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g. Threatening to hurt someone...

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h. Making someone do something they did not want to do...

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<th>4 or more times</th>
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9. In which places have any of these things happened to you during the school year? (For each category a through g, check all places that apply or check “Has not happened”) (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Playground</th>
<th>Lunch Class room</th>
<th>Gym Hallways</th>
<th>Bath room</th>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>Email or phone message</th>
<th>Has not happened this year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Pushed, shoved, hit, kicked, hair pulled, or tripped</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Made to do something that you didn’t want to do</td>
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<tr>
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Survey of Bullying at Your School

10. Tell us if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (a through d). Also, do you think most other students at your school would agree or disagree with these statements?

a. Students should NOT tease in a mean way, call others hurtful names, or spread unkind stories about other students.

My belief:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

I think most other students would...

b. Students should NOT shove, kick, hit, trip, or hair pull another student.

My belief:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

I think most other students would...

c. Students should NOT threaten to hit another student even if they don't actually hit the other student.

My belief:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

I think most other students would...

d. Students should always try to be friendly with students who are different from themselves.

My belief:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

I think most other students would...

11. Who do you think students should tell if they or someone else are being bullied at school? And what would most other students say?

(Check all that apply)

I think students should ...

(check all that apply)

- Tell a principal
- Tell a teacher or counselor
- Tell a hall monitor
- Tell a friend
- Tell a police officer or security person
- Tell a parent or another adult relative
- Tell a brother, sister, or cousin
- Not tell anyone

Most other students would say ...

(check all that apply)

- Tell a principal
- Tell a teacher or counselor
- Tell a hall monitor
- Tell a friend
- Tell a police officer or security person
- Tell a parent or another adult relative
- Tell a brother, sister, or cousin
- Not tell anyone

12. Who do you think students should tell if they see a weapon (knife or gun) at school? And what would most other students say?

(Check all that apply)

I think students should ...

(check all that apply)

- Tell a principal
- Tell a teacher or counselor
Most other students would say ...
(check all that apply)

a. Tell a principal
b. Tell a teacher or counselor
c. Tell a hall monitor
d. Tell a friend
e. Tell a police officer or security person
f. Tell a parent or another adult relative
g. Tell a brother, sister, or cousin
h. Not tell anyone
17. Activities: Which of the following groups or activities have you participated in this school year? (check all that apply)

- a. School club or student government
- b. School sport team
- c. School chorus or band
- d. Religious group
- e. After-school program that takes place at the school (like homework club, hobby club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, open gym, etc.)
- f. After-school program in the community (like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, dance class, gymnastics class, community sports program, hobby club, etc.)
- g. Part-time job (like baby sitting, newspaper delivery, lawn mowing, etc.)

18. What is the way you get to and from school most often? (choose one)
- School bus
- Walk or ride bike
- I drive
- Brother, sister, or friend drives
- Parent or another adult drives
- City bus or train

19. What grade do you receive most often on your report card? (choose one)

A □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
B □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
C □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
D □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
F □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

OR
Excellent □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
Good □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
Satisfactory □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
Unsatisfactory □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

20. What is your weight and height?

Weight

Height (enter feet and then inches)

feet

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21. Which best describes what you think of your current weight? (choose one)

I am...

- Very overweight
- Somewhat overweight
- About right
- Somewhat underweight
- Very underweight

22. What would you guess is the most typical (average) weight for boys and girls in your grade? (just give your best guess for each below)

Most typical (average) weight for boys in your grade

Most typical (average) weight for girls in your grade