

Identity-based bullying among Belgian adolescents: some results and many questions

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Overview

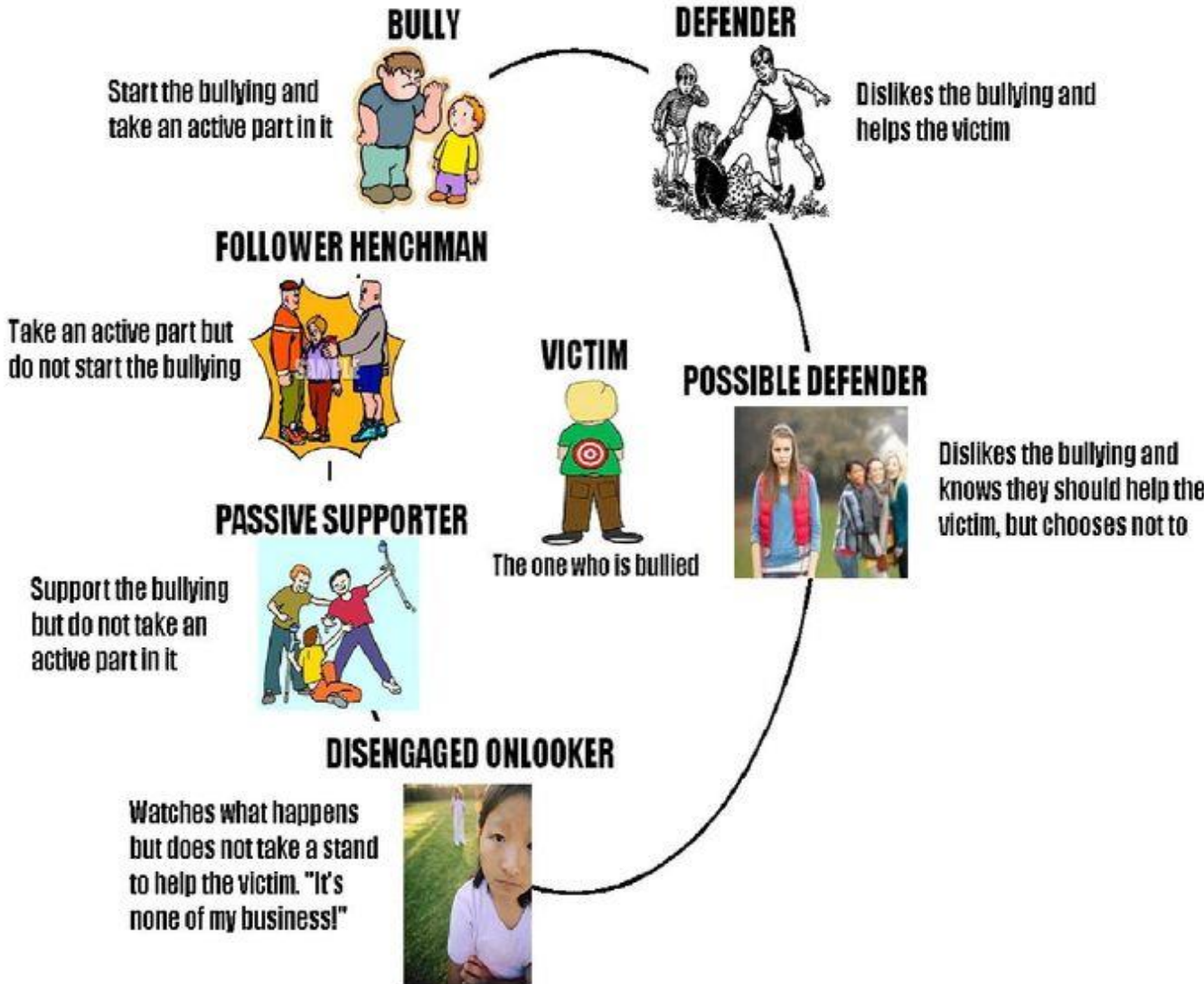
- What is bullying? What is the prevalence of bullying? What are the main consequences of bullying?
- What is identity-based bullying? What is perceived discrimination? What is the difference?
- Are some socio-demographic groups particularly at risk for peer victimization? Is school or class composition related to discrimination or victimization?
- Belgian adolescents experience of victimization and discrimination
- What motivates bullies?
- Moral disengagement and bullying
- Practical implications

What is bullying?

- School bullying = deliberate and repetitive negative actions toward one student perceived as less powerful (Olweus, 1993).
- Forms:
 - verbal
 - physical
 - social
 - property damage
 - cyber



The Bullying Circle: Which Side Are You On?



What is the prevalence of bullying?

- HBSC survey (Western countries)
- 2005/2006, 40 countries (Craig et al., 2009)
 - 10.7% bullying others (bullies)
 - 12.6% being bullied (victims)
 - 3.6% bully/victims
- 2009/2010 , 38 countries Currie et al. (2012)
 - 10.3% bullying others (bullies)
 - 11.3% being bullied (victims)
 - (no separate category for bully/victims)
- One of the most prevalent form of school violence (Galand et al., 2004; Mayer & Frulong, 2010).

Prevalence of frequent bullying victimisation among young people

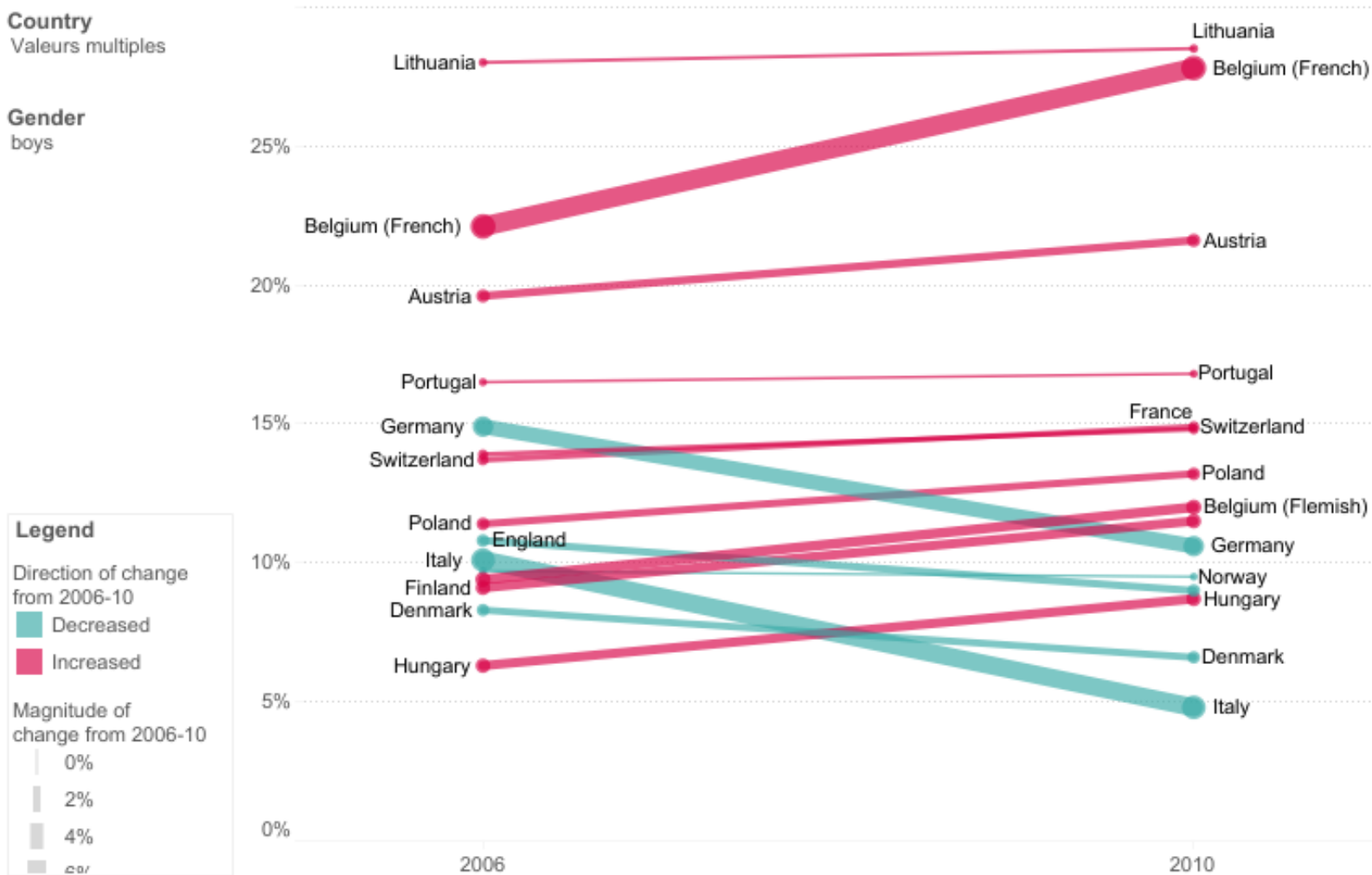
Young people were asked how often they had been bullied at school in the past couple of months. Response options ranged from "I was not bullied at school in the past couple of months" to "several times a week". The findings presented here show the proportions who reported being bullied at least twice a month at school in the past couple of months. Data shown are controlled for age and SES.

Country

Valeurs multiples

Gender

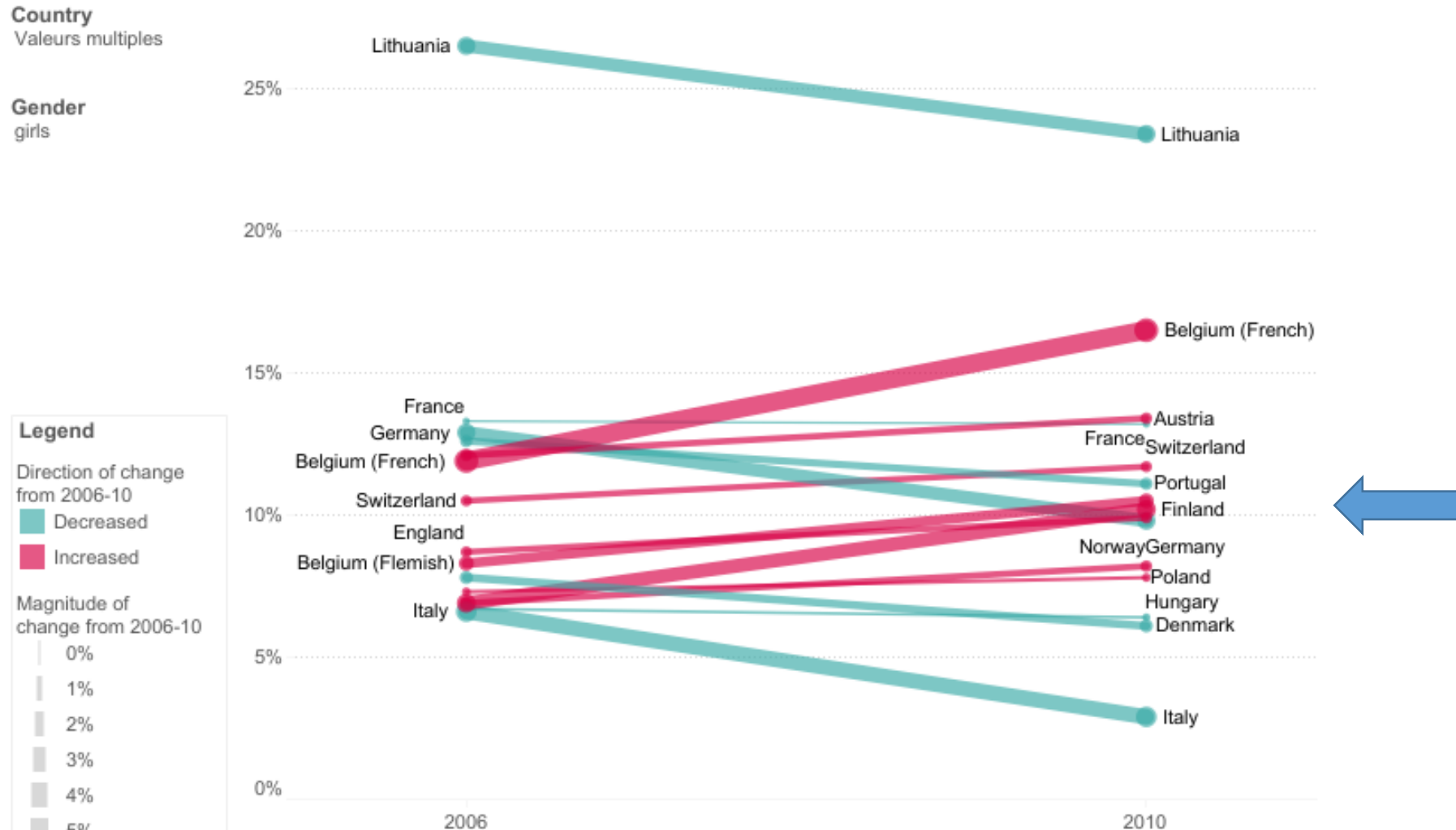
boys



Source: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC). World Health Organization Collaborative Cross-national study. <http://www.hbsc.org>

Prevalence of frequent bullying victimisation among young people

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What are the main consequences of bullying?

- Longitudinal studies
 - For victims: internalizing problems (Reijntjes et al., 2010)
 - For perpetrators: externalizing problems (Farrington et al., 2011)
 - For witnesses: negative perceptions of school climate and reduced psychosocial adjustment (Janosz et al., 2012, 2018)
- Deleterious effects on health and educational success (McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015).

What is identity-based bullying?

- “The terms bias bullying, identity-based bullying or prejudice driven bullying refer to bullying on the basis of group rather than individual characteristics, and include racial harassment, faith-based bullying, sexual harassment, and homophobic bullying.” (Smith, 2013, p.84).
- A large proportion of bullying seems to be identity-based (Russel et al., 2012).

What is perceived discrimination?

- It is important to distinguish the *objective* encounters with discrimination from the *subjective* interpretation of discrimination (Schmitt et al., 2014)
- Perceived discrimination = Attribution of mistreatment or relatively poor life event to one's group membership
 - Sexism (Swimm et al., 2001)
 - Racism (Greene et al., 2006)
 - Heterosexism (Berlan et al., 2010)
 - Prejudice against disability (Fink et al., 2015)
 - Weight-based discrimination (Puhl et al., 2008)
- Pervasive perceived discrimination has a negative effect on well-being (Fouquet-Chauprade, 2014; Schimtt et al., 2014).

Measurement issues

- Some overlap between measure of perceived discrimination and self-reported victimization by peer.
 - ‘you are treated with less respect than other people’
 - ‘How often are you called names or insulted by other teenagers because of your race or ethnicity?’
 - “How often do other students treat you unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?”
 - Sometimes people feel they are discriminated against or treated badly by other people. Do you have been discriminated against in the past 12 months: (1) “Because of your race, ethnicity or color?” (2) “Because you are (or your family is) from another country” (3) “Because someone thought you were gay, lesbian or bisexual”, and (4) “Because of your weight.”
- As for perceived discrimination, measures of identity-based bullying often include attribution
 - Students’ reports of being “bullied, threatened, or harassed” in the past 12 months about their racial/ethnic background or being perceived as lesbian, gay, and bisexual
 - “How often do any of the following things happen?” “You are teased about your (a) race, (b) weight and, (c) family’s financial situation.”
 - “During the last 30 days, how often have other students harassed or bullied you for any of the following reasons?” (a) “Your race, ethnicity, or national origin,” (b) “Your gender (being male or female),” (c) “Because you are gay or lesbian or because someone thought you were,” (d) “A physical or mental disability,” or (e) “Your weight or physical appearance”

Limitations

- Many identity-based bullying / discrimination studies focused on one kind of bias or on one specific subgroup.
- Little is known about the intersection of multiple attributes of discrimination and bullying.
- **Are some minority categories especially at risk?**
 - Inconsistent results (Bucchianeri et al., 2016; Freitas et al., 2017; Garnett et al., 2014)
 - Local context probably matters

Are some socio-demographic group particularly at risk for peer victimization?

- In Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, the frequency of peer victimization is not associated with... (Galand et al., 2014, 2015)
 - Language spoken at home
 - Parents' nationality
 - Parents' educational level
 - Parents' employment status
 - Parent's marital status
 - Family material wealth
 - School track

Is school or class composition related to discrimination or victimization?

- Vervoort et al., 2010
 - 117 school classes in the Netherlands.
 - Ethnic minority adolescents were less victimized, but did not differ from the ethnic majority group members on bullying.
 - Victimization was more prevalent in ethnically heterogeneous classes.
- Agirdag et al., 2011
 - 68 Flemish primary schools
 - Non-native pupils report less peer victimization in schools with a higher minority concentration and this relationship is mediated by the interethnic school climate (less frequent conflicts or quarrels at school with peers of Belgian origin).
 - In contrast, for native pupils, the concentration of ethnic minority students is not associated with peer victimization.

A study on school and classroom effects in Brussels (Galand et al., 2014)

- **Method**
- Sample : 3.240 students in grade 9 (mean age 15) from 234 classrooms nested in 64 urban schools; balanced between gender
- Procedure: anonymous questionnaire
- Measures:
 - Bullying: 8 items, alpha = .83
 - Victimization: 8 items, alpha = .84

	Bullying		Victimization	
Fix effects	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error
Intercept	0.40	(.02)***	0.63	(.03)***
<u>Individual level</u>				
Gender	0.21	(.03)***	-0.02	(.03)
Grade retention	0.07	(.01)***	-0.01	(.02)
<u>Classroom level</u>				
<i>Composition</i>				
Boys ratio	0.02	(.07)	0.15	(.08) ^a
<i>Educational practices</i>				
Direct intervention	-0.21	(.08)*	-0.17	(.06)**
Classroom management	-	-	-	-
Autonomy support	-	-	-	-
Teacher-students relationships	-	-	-	-
Performance goal structure	0.15	(.06)*	0.17	(.07)*
Mastery goal structure	-	-	-	-

Results

- Multilevel analyses showed no significant school effects and small classroom effects on bullying and victimization.
- At the classroom level, composition effects were null to very small.
- Classroom management and competitive goal structure explained between-classroom variations in bullying (39%) and victimization (28%).
- These results suggest that interventions targeted at daily classroom practices could be a way to prevent or reduce school bullying and peer victimization.
 - Quick and systematic reaction from the teachers in case of conflict between students
 - Teacher behaviors avoiding competition, social comparison and inequality of treatment

Belgian adolescents experience of victimization and discrimination

- Master thesis: Yannick Degardin, Charlie Devleeschouwer, Camila Canellada Fernandez, Lucas Romain
- Youth experience of bullying and discrimination based on ...
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Sexual orientation
 - Disability
 - Weight (BMI)
- Paper and online survey
- 769 young people 15-25 years-old (mean age = 19)
- From comprehensive, vocational, apprenticeship, and special education

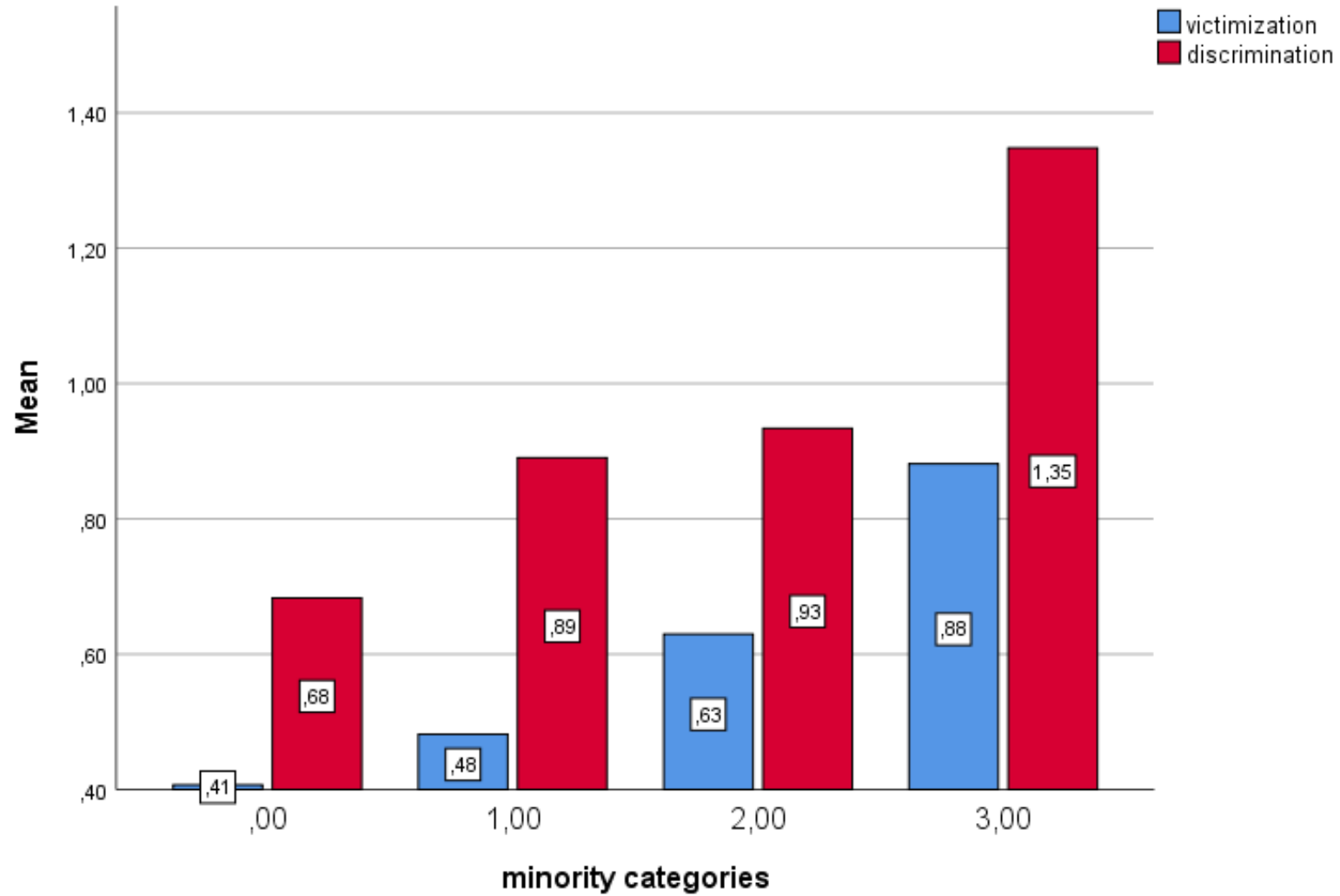
Univariate analyses

- Correlation between self-reported victimization and perceived discrimination = .61
- Gender: women reported more victimization but no more discrimination
- Ethnicity: no differences
- Sexual orientation: nonheterosexual reported more victimization and discrimination
- Weight (BMI): no differences
- Disability: young people with disability reported more victimization and discrimination

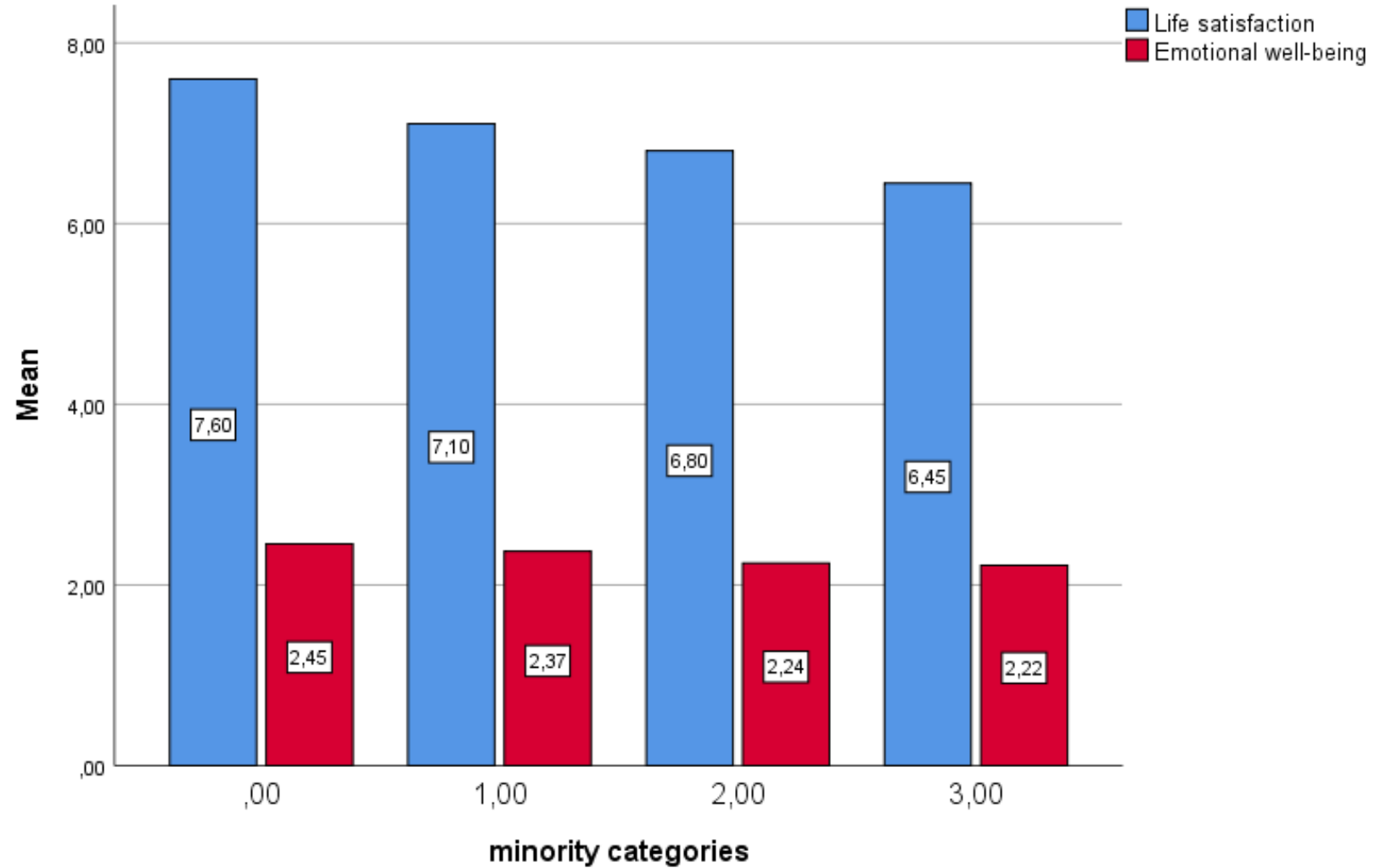
Multivariate analyses

- Disability, gender, sexual orientation and weight are independently related to victimization (even controlling for peer aggression). Together they cover 6% of variance in victimization frequency.
- Perceived discrimination is mainly related to disability and sexual orientation (5% of variance).
- The relationship between peer victimization and emotional well-being/life satisfaction is mediated by perceived discrimination.
- Social support is more strongly related to emotional well-being/life satisfaction than perceived discrimination.
- Overweight is associated with lower perceived support.
- Attribution of victimization to personal characteristics is more damaging for emotional well-being/life satisfaction than attribution to group characteristics.

Cumulative risk



Subjective well-being



What motivates bullies?



Deviancy?



Dominance?



Distress?



Protection?



Compensation?

Method (Galand & Baudoin, 2015)

- Sample

- 2261 students from various socio-economic background
- Grade 7 and 9, 22 schools
- 11 to 18 years-old (mean = 14) ; 48,3 % girls

- Procedure

- Anonymous questionnaire with several indicators related to each hypothesis

Multiple regression

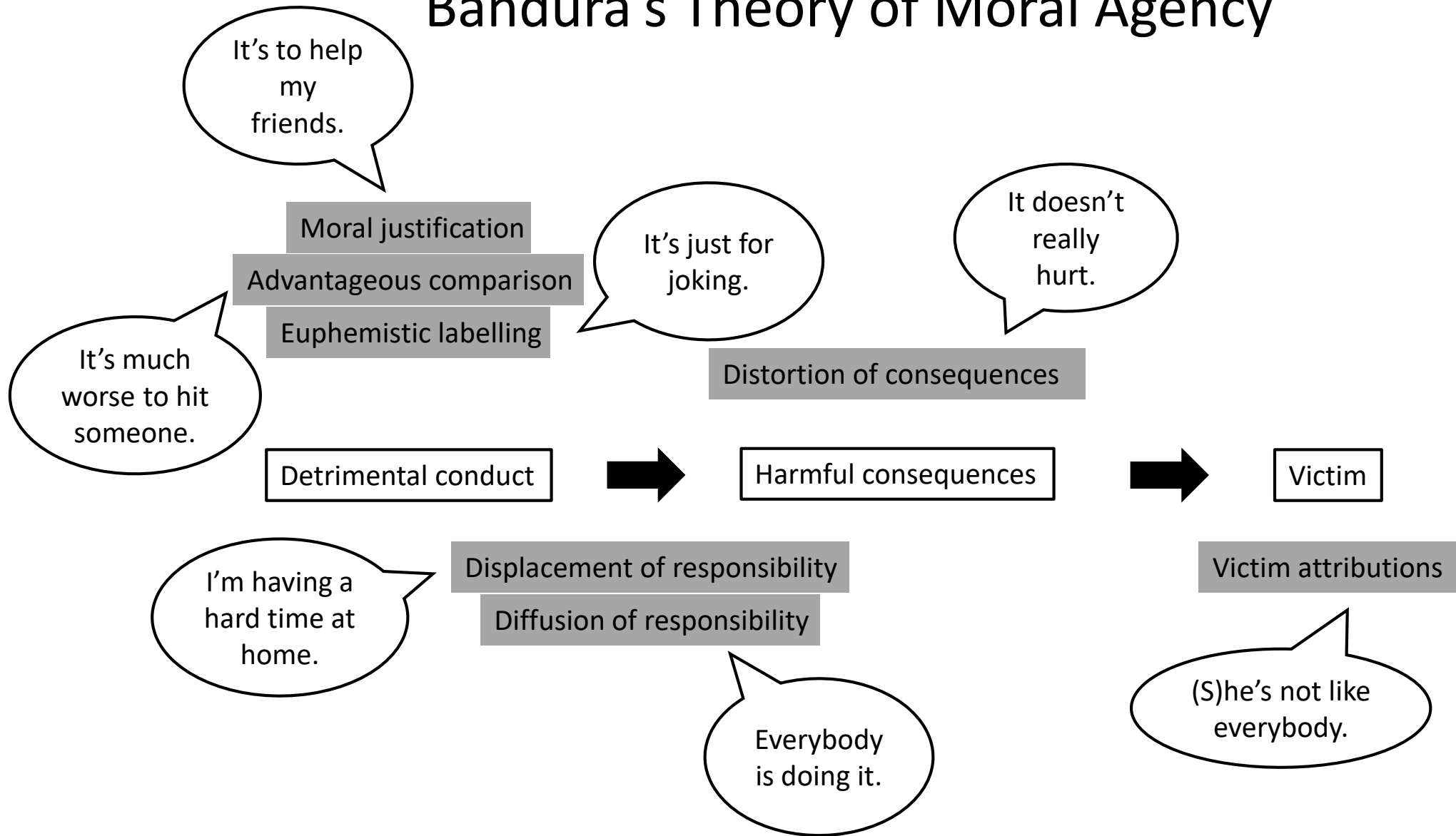
- Among the 18 indicators, frequency of bullying behavior is directly associated with ($R^2 = .39$):
 - Delinquency
 - Affiliation with deviant peers
 - Beliefs supporting aggression
 - Reduced perspective taking
 - Perceived violence at school
 - Negative impulsivity
- Results mainly support **deviancy** and **dominance** hypotheses.

Moral disengagement and bullying

The self-regulatory mechanisms governing moral conduct do not come into play unless they are activated, and there are many psychosocial maneuvers by which moral self-sanctions are selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct. The moral disengagement may center on the cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct into a benign or worthy one by moral justification, sanitizing language, and advantageous comparison; disavowal of a sense of personal agency by diffusion or displacement of responsibility; disregarding or minimizing the injurious effects of one's actions; and attribution of blame to, and dehumanization of those who are victimized. (Bandura, 1999)

Moral disengagement is associated with bullying and passivity of bystanders (Gini, Pozzoli & Hymel, 2014; Gregory, Trach, Shumka, Lee, & Hymel, 2012).

Bandura's Theory of Moral Agency



Summary

- Peer victimization + attribution > perceived discrimination > reduced well-being
- It is not clear if group attribution is more detrimental than individual attribution.
- Social support and positive ingroup identity also contribute to well-being.
- Bullying is related with deviancy and dominance (power).
- Bullies do not necessarily lack social skills but are often morally disengaged from their bullying behaviors.
- We do not know if and how much bullying is prejudice driven.
- Negative stereotypes and bias as a way to instil dominance and to facilitate moral disengagement?

Practical implications – complementary approaches

- How to reduce peer victimization?
 - Improve teaching practices (see above)
 - Implement effective prevention programs (Gaffney et al., 2019)
- What works to reduce prejudice?
 - Cooperative learning (Paluck & Green, 2009)
- How to promote social support and openness to diversity?
 - Cooperative learning (Roseth et al., 2008)
 - Social norms intervention (Paluck, Shepherd & Aronow, 2016)
 - Conflict resolution and peace education (Spruyt et al., 2014)
 - Structured spaces for dialogue with interactions regulation (e.g. Class council) (Carra, 2012)

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