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*Hostile attributions bias and perceived self-efficacy  
of adolescent bullies, victims, bully-victims, and  
those uninvolved in bullying.*

Simon C. Hunter, James M.E. Boyle & David Warden  
University of Strathclyde

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[simon.hunter@strath.ac.uk](mailto:simon.hunter@strath.ac.uk)



# Background

- Clarification of the cognitive underpinnings of involvement in bullying should improve intervention and prevention work
- Self-efficacy?
  - distinguish between efficacy for aggressive and non-aggressive behaviours?
- Hostile attributions biases?
  - Regardless of hostile attribution bias, self-efficacy (as above) predicts use of aggression or prosocial behaviour
  - However, hostile attribution biases may differentiate between bullies and bully-victims



# Background

- Theoretical basis for differentiating intervention and/or prevention based on theory?

## Hypotheses

1. Victims will have lower overall self-efficacy (i.e. for both aggressive and non-aggressive actions) compared to uninvolved pupils
2. Bully-victims and bullies will have higher aggressive self-efficacy than victims and uninvolved pupils
3. Bully-victims will have a higher hostile attribution bias than victims, bullies and uninvolved pupils



# Method

- Participants were 520 pupils (49% male) aged 12 - 14 years attending mainstream Scottish schools. Three hundred and six pupils were in Secondary Two and 205 in Secondary Three.
- Measures were completed in classroom settings:
  - victimisation
  - self-efficacy – vignette measure
  - hostile attribution bias – vignette measure(latter two measures based on Hubbard et al.'s 2001 measures)



# Results

- Bullies: 5% overall (7% of boys, 4% of girls)
- Bully-victims: 9% overall (9% of boys, 8% of girls)
- Victims: 35% overall (33% of boys, 36% of girls)
- Uninvolved: 51% overall (50% of boys, 52% of girls)
  
- Aggressive and non-aggressive self-efficacy scores correlated ( $r = .44, p < 0.001$ )
- Neither type of self-efficacy correlated with hostile attribution score
  
- 3-way mixed-ANOVA: *gender x bullying involvement* (bully/ bully-victim/ victim/ uninvolved) x *self-efficacy* (aggressive/ non-aggressive)



# Results

## Self-efficacy:

- 3-way mixed-ANOVA: *gender x bullying involvement* (bully/ bully-victim/ victim/ uninvolved) x *self-efficacy* (aggressive/ non-aggressive):
  - no effect of gender.
  - main effect of self-efficacy: overall, pupils reported significantly higher non-aggressive than aggressive self-efficacy.
  - main effect of bullying involvement: victims reported significantly lower overall self-efficacy than uninvolved pupils.
  - no interactions.



# Results

## Hostile Attribution Bias:

- 2-way ANOVA: *gender x bullying involvement* (bully/ bully-victim/ victim/ uninvolved)  
→ no main effects or interactions.





# Discussion

- Victims reported significantly lower self-efficacy than uninvolved pupils (and were lower than all other groups at a trend level)
  - such perceptions are likely to contribute toward the maintenance of victimisation by encouraging less adaptive responses i.e. submissive and unassertive behaviours
- Hostile attribution biases unrelated to status
  - perhaps bully victims are *not* simply provocative victims, and these two groups must be distinguished more clearly

