

The Normative Beliefs about Aggression Scale [NOBAGS]

(Oct 1998/Oct 2011)

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The 20 item scale is designed to measure a child's, adolescent's or young adult's perception of how acceptable it is to behave aggressively both under varying conditions of provocation and when no conditions are specified. The items are appropriate for children from nursery school through adulthood with a change in the nouns "boy" and "girl" to "young man" and "young woman" for college age subjects or to "man" and "woman" for older adults. The scale may be administered individually with very young children, in group settings with the items being read and monitors checking on the children's responses for early primary school children, or in group or individual sessions with little supervision for older children.

The items on the scale were derived through a process of pilot testing and revision and now have been used on subjects from age 6 to 30 in a variety of countries and ethnic groups. There are two forms of the scale, C and D, that differ only in the direction in which specific items are worded, i.e. "it is wrong" or "it is OK." A different one-half of the items are worded in each direction on each scale.

The items on the scale are a subset of 35 items used on a previous of the scale called AGGAPS for Aggression Approval Scale. Those forms also used a different response scale, NEVER, SOMETIMES, OFTEN, ALWAYS which has been replaced with the current more valid response scales. Nevertheless, normative data are available for the old version as well as the new.

References:

Huesmann, L. R., & Guerra, N. G. (1997). Children's normative beliefs about aggression and aggressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(2), 408-419.

Guerra, N. G., Huesmann, L. R., & Spindler, A. J. (2003). Community violence exposure, social cognition, and aggression among urban elementary school children. *Child Development*, 74(5), 1507-1522. [PMID: 14552414]

Guerra, N.G., Huesmann, L.R. & Hanish, L. (1995). The role of normative beliefs in children's social behavior. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Review of Personality and Social Psychology: Vol. 15. Social Development*, (pp. 140-158). London: Sage.

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Huesmann, L.R., Guerra, N.G., Zelli, A. & Miller, L. (1992). Differing cognitions relating to TV viewing and aggression among boys and girls. In K. Bjorkqvist & P. Niemela (Eds.), *Of Mice and Women*. New York: Academic Press.

The 20 Items on the Normative Beliefs about Aggression Scale for Children

Response Choices

IT'S PERFECTLY OK

IT'S SORT OF OK

IT'S SORT OF WRONG

IT'S REALLY WRONG

The choices are ordered to agree with the framing of the question; so "REALLY WRONG" is the first alternative for "Wrong" questions and "PERFECTLY OK" is the first alternative for OK questions. In any case, the answer most approving of aggression is always scored "4"; the next most approving is scored "3"; the next most approving is scored "2"; and the least approving is scored "1".

Instructions

The following questions ask you about whether you think certain behaviors are WRONG or are OK. Circle the answer that best describes what you think. Circle ONE and only one answer.

Retaliation Belief Questions

Suppose a boy says something bad to another boy, John.

- 1) Do you think it's OK for John to scream at him?
- 2) Do you think it's OK for John to hit him?

Suppose a boy says something bad to a girl.

- 3) Do you think it's wrong for the girl to scream at him?
- 4) Do you think it's wrong for the girl to hit him?

Suppose a girl says something bad to another girl, Mary.

- 5) Do you think it's OK for Mary to scream at her?
- 6) Do you think it's OK for Mary to hit her?

Suppose a girl says something bad to a boy.

- 7) Do you think it's wrong for the boy to scream at her?
- 8) Do you think it's wrong for the boy to hit her?

Suppose a boy hits another boy, John?

- 9) Do you think it's wrong for John to hit him back?

Suppose a boy hits a girl.

- 10) Do you think it's OK for the girl to hit him back?

Suppose a girl hits another girl, Mary?

- 11) Do you think it's wrong for Mary to hit her back?

Suppose a girl hits a boy.

- 12) Do you think it's wrong for the boy to hit her back?

General Belief Questions

13. In general, it is wrong to hit other people.
 14. If you're angry, it is OK to say mean things to other people.
 15. In general, it is OK to yell at others and say bad things.
 16. It is usually OK to push or shove other people around if you're mad.
 17. It is wrong to insult other people.
 18. It is wrong to take it out on others by saying mean things when you're mad.
 19. It is generally wrong to get into physical fights with others.
 20. In general, it is OK to take your anger out on others by using physical force.
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The current NOBAGS scale consists of 12 items assessing approval of aggression in response to specific provocations plus 8 items assessing approval of aggression "in general" when no provocations are mentioned.

On the provocation items two types of provocation are used for each aggressive act - 'weak provocation' which is "saying something bad" and 'strong provocation' which is "hitting." For the two provocations two types of aggressive acts are tested -- 'screaming at the other' or 'hitting the other.' Varying gender or provoker and gender of responder would then produce $2*2*2*2=16$ different questions. However, the four involving weak provocation and 'hitting' as the responder's aggressive act were eliminated because of the very low variance in response frequency.

The 8 general assessment items are divided equally into testing the approval of physically aggressive and verbally aggressive acts.

Forms C and D of the scale differ only in which items are worded in the "it is OK" direction and in the "it is WRONG" direction. The directions are listed below.

 Summary of Types of Items on Each Form

<u>Item type</u>	<u>Form C Question</u>	<u>Form D Question</u>
<i>After 1) weak and 2) strong provocation</i>		
Boy says bad to boy	OK	WRONG
Boy says bad to girl	WRONG	OK
Girl says bad to girl	OK	WRONG
Girl says bad to boy	WRONG	OK
<i>After strong provocation</i>		
Boy hits boy	WRONG	OK
Boy hits girl	OK	WRONG
Girl hits girl	WRONG	OK
Girl hits boy	OK	WRONG
<i>General beliefs</i>		
Hit other people	WRONG	OK
Say mean things	OK	WRONG
Yell at others	OK	WRONG
Push or shove others	OK	WRONG
Insult others	WRONG	OK
Say mean things to others	WRONG	OK
Get into fights	WRONG	OK
Use physical force	OK	OK

Scoring

All items are scored so "4" is most approving of aggression; 3 is next most approving; 2 is next most approving; and 1 is the score for the answer least approving of aggression. Scale scores are the mean of the scores on the items on the scale that were answered by the child. Thus, each score represents the child's *normative beliefs in the appropriateness of aggression*. Each scale score is the mean of the non-missing item scores on the scale.

Normative Beliefs about Aggression for Children

Reliabilities of Normative Beliefs About Aggression Scale and Subscales

Data are from study of 1,550 early elementary children described in attached paper by Huesmann & Guerra (1997).

Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha							
		Overall (n=1550)	By Gender		By Ethnicity			By Grade	
			Female (n=806)	Male (n=744)	African Amer (n=602)	White (n=280)	Hispanic (n=567)	1 (n=784)	4 (n=766)
Total Approval of Aggression	1-20	.86	.86	.86	.84	.90	.86	.87	.84
General Approval of Aggression	13-20	.80	.79	.80	.80	.83	.79	.78	.82
Approval of Retaliation	1-12	.82	.83	.80	.80	.85	.81	.82	.77
Approval of Retaliation, Weak Provocation	1-8	.75	.76	.74	.71	.79	.75	.75	.71
Approval of Retaliation, Strong Provocation	9-12	.71	.75	.68	.72	.76	.64	.71	.65
Approval of Retaliation Against Males	1-4, 9, 10	.70	.73	.67	.66	.74	.70	.65	.65
Approval of Retaliation Against Females	5-8, 11, 12	.69	.70	.68	.67	.76	.68	.71	.65

Example of Questionnaire Form C

The following questions ask you about whether you think certain behaviors are WRONG or are OK. Circle the answer that best describes what you think. Circle ONE and only one answer.

Suppose a boy says something bad to another boy, John.

- 1) Do you think it's OK for John to scream at him?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
PERFECTLY OK SORT OF OK SORT OF WRONG REALLY WRONG
- 2) Do you think it's OK for John to hit him?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
PERFECTLY OK SORT OF OK SORT OF WRONG REALLY WRONG

Suppose a boy says something bad to a girl.

- 3) Do you think it's wrong for the girl to scream at him?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
REALLY WRONG SORT OF WRONG SORT OF OK PERFECTLY OK
- 4) Do you think it's wrong for the girl to hit him?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
REALLY WRONG SORT OF WRONG SORT OF OK PERFECTLY OK

Suppose a girl says something bad to another girl, Mary.

- 5) Do you think it's OK for Mary to scream at her?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
PERFECTLY OK SORT OF OK SORT OF WRONG REALLY WRONG
- 6) Do you think it's OK for Mary to hit her?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
PERFECTLY OK SORT OF OK SORT OF WRONG REALLY WRONG

Suppose a girl says something bad to a boy.

- 7) Do you think it's wrong for the boy to scream at her?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
REALLY WRONG SORT OF WRONG SORT OF OK PERFECTLY OK
- 8) Do you think it's wrong for the boy to hit her?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
REALLY WRONG SORT OF WRONG SORT OF OK PERFECTLY OK

Suppose a boy hits another boy, John?

- 9) Do you think it's wrong for John to hit him back?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
REALLY WRONG SORT OF WRONG SORT OF OK PERFECTLY OK

Suppose a boy hits a girl.

- 10) Do you think it's OK for the girl to hit him back?
IT'S IT'S IT'S IT'S
PERFECTLY OK SORT OF OK SORT OF WRONG REALLY WRONG

Suppose a girl hits another girl, Mary?

11) Do you think it's wrong for Mary to hit her back?

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
REALLY WRONG	SORT OF WRONG	SORT OF OK	PERFECTLY OK

Suppose a girl hits a boy.

12) Do you think it's OK for the boy to hit her back?

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
PERFECTLY OK	SORT OF OK	SORT OF WRONG	REALLY WRONG

13. In general, it is wrong to hit other people.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
REALLY WRONG	SORT OF WRONG	SORT OF OK	PERFECTLY OK

14. If you're angry, it is OK to say mean things to other people.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
PERFECTLY OK	SORT OF OK	SORT OF WRONG	REALLY WRONG

15. In general, it is OK to yell at others and say bad things.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
PERFECTLY OK	SORT OF OK	SORT OF WRONG	REALLY WRONG

16. It is usually OK to push or shove other people around if you're mad.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
PERFECTLY OK	SORT OF OK	SORT OF WRONG	REALLY WRONG

17. It is wrong to insult other people.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
REALLY WRONG	SORT OF WRONG	SORT OF OK	PERFECTLY OK

18. It is wrong to take it out on others by saying mean things when you're mad.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
REALLY WRONG	SORT OF WRONG	SORT OF OK	PERFECTLY OK

19. It is generally wrong to get into physical fights with others.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
REALLY WRONG	SORT OF WRONG	SORT OF OK	PERFECTLY OK

20. In general, it is OK to take your anger out on others by using physical force.

IT'S	IT'S	IT'S	IT'S
PERFECTLY OK	SORT OF OK	SORT OF WRONG	REALLY WRONG

Normative Beliefs about Aggression for College Students

Total and Subscale Reliabilities and Norms for Vers of March 1, 1990

When administering the questions to college students or other young adults, the wording of the questions is changed by replacing every occurrence of "boy" with "young man" and every occurrence of "girl" with young woman.

The statistics below are based on a sample of N=132 first year undergraduate students at University of Illinois at Chicago. Data were collected in March 1990. When the coding was reversed for the reversed items on Form D, the mean scores did not differ significantly from the mean scores on Form C. As Form C and Form D did not differ in terms of scale item means due to the wording of the response scale (i.e., "it is OK" vs. "it is wrong"), the Form C-sample (N=60) and Form D-sample (N=72) were considered together in subsequent analyses. Scale scores are means of items on the different subscales. The subscales are not all orthogonal.

In interpreting the means below, note that the scores have been coded so that "Yes, it's perfectly OK ... to do the aggressive act" = 4.0; "It is sort of OK...." = 3.0; "it is sort of WRONG...." = 2.0; and "It is really wrong...." = 1.0.

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Total approval of Agg	1-20	.90	1.92	0.55
Agg with provocation	1-12	.86	2.16	0.57
Agg with weak provocation	1-8	.87	1.94	0.62
Agg with strong provocation	9-12	.72	2.60	0.74
Boy's aggression	1,2,7-9,12	.72	2.03	0.57
Girl's aggression	3-6,10,11	.79	2.30	0.64
Boy hit	2,8,9,12	.53	1.87	0.57
Girl hit	4,6,10,11	.66	2.21	0.65
Boy scream	1,7	.78	2.35	0.80
Girl scream	3,5	.74	2.45	0.81
Aggression at boy	1-4,9,10	.81	2.32	0.66
Aggression at girl	5-8,11,12	.70	2.00	0.55
Hit a boy	2,4,9,10	.69	2.24	0.68
Hit a girl	6,8,11,12	.54	1.85	0.57
Boy agg at boy	1,2,9	.70	2.24	0.70
Boy agg at girl	7,8,12	.47	1.82	0.62
Girl agg at girl	5,6,11	.63	2.19	0.66
Girl agg at boy	3,4,10	.63	2.39	0.72
General approval	13-20	.85	1.50	0.55

Scoring

All items are scored so "4" is most approving of aggression; 3 is next most approving; 2 is next most approving; and 1 is the score for the answer least approving of aggression. Scale scores are the mean of the scores on the items on the scale that were answered by the child. Thus, each score represents the child's *normative beliefs in the appropriateness of aggression*. Each scale score is the mean of the non-missing item scores on the scale.

Selected Publications Using Scale:

- Huesmann, L. R., Moise, J., Podolski, C. P., & Eron, L. D. (2003). Longitudinal relations between childhood exposure to media violence and adult aggression and violence: 1977-1992. *Developmental Psychology, 39*(2), 201-221.
- Souweidane, V. & Huesmann, L. R. (1999). The influence of American urban culture on the development of normative beliefs about aggression in Middle-Eastern immigrants. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 27*(2), 239-254.
- Alexander, F., Allen, C., Brooks, J., Cole, C., & Campbell, A. (2004). Reason to believe: Representations of aggression and phenomenological read-out. *Sex Roles, 51*, 647-659.
- Amjad, N., & Wood, A. (2009). Identifying and changing the normative beliefs about aggression which lead young Muslim adults to join extremist anti-Semitic groups in Pakistan. *Aggressive Behavior, 35*, 514-519.
- Archer, J., & Graham-Kevan, N. (2003). Do beliefs about aggression predict physical aggression to partners? *Aggressive Behavior, 29*, 41-54.
- Bailey, C. A. & Ostrov, J. M. (2007). Differentiating forms and functions of aggression in emerging adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37*, 713-722.
- Berkel, L., Vandiver, B., & Bahner, A. (2004). Gender role attitudes, religion, and spirituality as predictors of domestic violence attitudes in white college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*, 119-133.
- Burt, M. (1983). A conceptual framework for victimological research. *Victimology, 8*, 131-150.
- Shahinfar, A., Kupersmidt, J. B., & Matza, L. S. (2001). The relation between exposure to violence and social information processing among incarcerated adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 110*, 136-141.