

Study examines adolescents' responses to racism in school

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When adolescents read a hypothetical scenario about verbal racism in school, age, ethnicity, cross-group friendships, and ethnic socialisation predicted their bystander responses.

Prosocial bystander responses (intentions to help others) were most commonly reported, followed by passive (ignoring), then aggressive responses. Younger adolescents were more likely to indicate prosocial bystander responses than older adolescents, whereas older adolescents were relatively more likely to indicate [aggressive responses](#). As majority-ethnic adolescents got older their passive intentions increased, whereas minority-ethnic adolescents' passive intentions decreased with age.

The study also showed how having friends from different ethnic-groups can help reduce less constructive aggressive and passive responses, and how ethnic socialisation can further promote prosocial [bystander](#) responses among minority-ethnic adolescents.

"Understanding when and why adolescents will challenge instances of racist or 'bias-based' bullying and discrimination in schools is clearly very complex, and this complexity seems to increase across adolescence. However, we know that when bystanders defend others it can really help reduce these instances from recurring, so it's important to consider what encourages or prevents young people in helping others," said Dr. Sally Palmer, lead author of the *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* study. "Our findings highlight the relevance of examining influences related to group-identity, particularly when dealing with

issues of bias-based bullying. Certainly more research is needed to explore this issue further."

More information: Sally B. Palmer et al, Majority and minority ethnic status adolescents' bystander responses to racism in school, *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1002/casp.2313](https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2313)

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