



Social Competence Among Children and Adolescents: Development of an Indicator

Stephen J. Blumberg



**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics**

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Social Competence Among Children and Adolescents: Development of an Indicator

Adam C. Carle

University of North Florida

Kathleen S. O'Connor

National Center for Health Statistics

Kristin A. Moore and Laura H. Lippman

Child Trends

Originally presented at the inaugural conference of the International Society for Child Indicators, Chicago, IL, June 27, 2007

Social Competence

- A set of skills necessary to get along with others and be well-liked
- Skills rely on perceptiveness of other's feelings and perspectives, knowledge about social rules and social life, and insight in social situations.
- Skills are manifested as the general ability to interact successfully with other people, to be generous and thoughtful, and to use accepted social techniques when attempting to influence other's behaviors.
- Social competence is enhanced by the absence of behaviors that interfere with social interactions.

Presentation Goals

- Describe a new measure of social competence that was designed for use in the National Survey of Children's Health
- Explore the substantive and psychometric characteristics of this brief, action-oriented measure
- Consider its appropriateness as a social indicator

Some Social Competence Measures Are Too Lengthy

- Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment
- Social Skills Rating System parent and teacher forms
- Child Behavior Checklist and Teacher's Report Form
- Revised Behavior Problem Checklist
- Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) Monitor and BASC parent and teacher forms
- Behavior Rating Profile parent and teacher forms
- Burks' Behavior Rating Scales
- Social-Emotional Dimension Scale
- Behavior and Emotional Rating Scale

Some Social Competence Measures Are Not Sufficiently Validated

- “Prosocial orientation” subscale of the Social Competence Inventory
 - **Validity limited to 8- and 9-year-old children and to paper-and-pencil administration**
- Social competence subscale of the Positive Behavior Scale
 - **Validity limited to demonstration of strong internal consistency and correlation with teacher ratings of social skills**
- Prosocial behaviors subscale of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
 - **May only reflect parents’ general willingness to attribute positive qualities to their children**

National Survey of Children's Health, 2003

- Expert panel recommended...
 1. **A brief scale on social competence and related behavior problems should be created for children 6-17 years of age.**
 2. **The desired scale was to be valid for both boys and girls and for both younger children and adolescents.**

National Survey of Children's Health, 2003

- Technical panel reviewed...
 - Behavior Problems Index
 - Positive Behaviors Scale
- Selected 4 social skills items and 4 behavior problems items using 3 criteria
 - Face validity
 - Policy relevance
 - Strength of relationship with the relevant construct based on 661 pretest interviews
- 3 of the social skills items were newly developed for this scale

NSCH Social Competence Scale

- *I am going to read a list of items that sometimes describe children. For each item, please tell me how often this was true for your child during the past month. Would you say never, sometimes, usually, or always?*
 1. [He/She] argues too much.
 2. [He/She] bullies or is cruel or mean to others.
 3. [He/She] shows respect for teachers and neighbors.
 4. [He/She] gets along well with other children.

NSCH Social Competence Scale

- *I am going to read a list of items that sometimes describe children. For each item, please tell me how often this was true for your child during the past month. Would you say never, sometimes, usually, or always?*
- 5. [He/She] is disobedient.
- 6. [He/She] is stubborn, sullen, or irritable.
- 7. [He/She] tries to understand other people's feelings.
- 8. [He/She] tries to resolve conflicts with classmates, families, or friends.

National Survey of Children's Health, 2003

- RDD telephone survey of a representative sample of children less than 18 years of age
- Fielded January 2003 – June 2004
- Interviews completed for 69,031 children 6-17
- Respondent was usually the mother (79%)
- Interview included demographics, health and functional status, health insurance coverage, health care access and utilization, health care quality, family functioning, parental health, and neighborhood characteristics.

Method for Evaluating the NSCH Social Competence Scale

- Explored the dimensional structure and fit of factor analytic models
- Examined the fit of a Rasch-family Graded Response Model with constrained discrimination parameters
- Evaluated the possibility of differential item functioning (DIF) across age and sex
- Using the final IRT measurement model, scale scores were estimated for all children in the sample and then compared to raw scale scores
- Logistic regression analyses with the raw scores were used to evaluate the construct validity of the measure

Dimensional Structure

■ Social Skills Scale

- Shows respect for teachers and neighbors.
- Gets along well with other children.
- Tries to understand other people's feelings.
- Tries to resolve conflicts with classmates, families, or friends.

■ Behavior Problems Scale

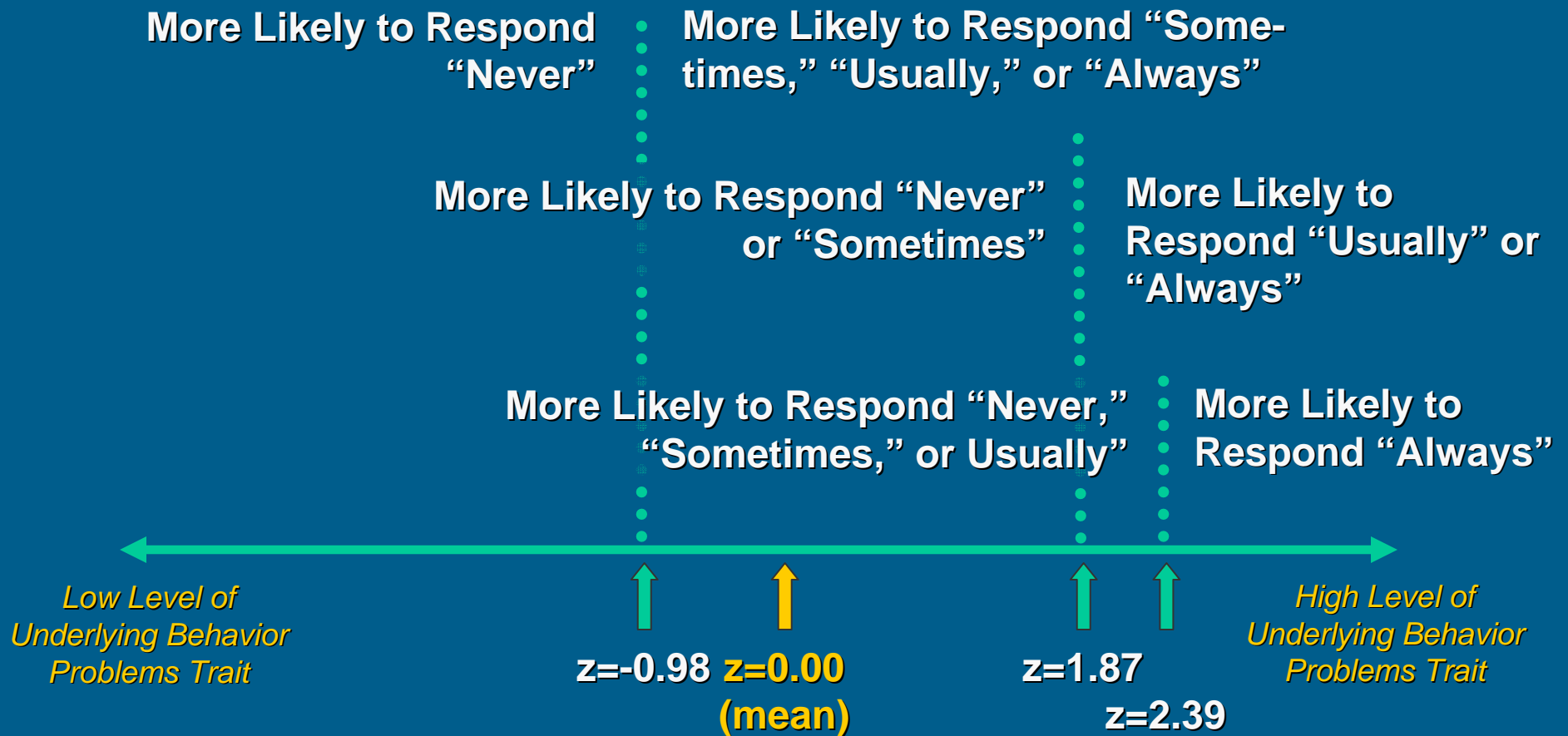
- Argues too much.
- Bullies or is cruel or mean to others.
- Is disobedient.
- Is stubborn, sullen, or irritable.

The 2 factors were permitted to correlate
($r = -.68$)

Graded Response Model

- Rasch-modified model
 - Item discrimination parameters were constrained to equality within each scale but not across scales
 - Thresholds permitted to vary
- Model provided good fit
 - RMSEA = 0.04
 - CFI = 0.92
 - TLI = 0.95
 - Gamma hat = 0.99
 - McDonald's Non-Centrality Index = 0.98

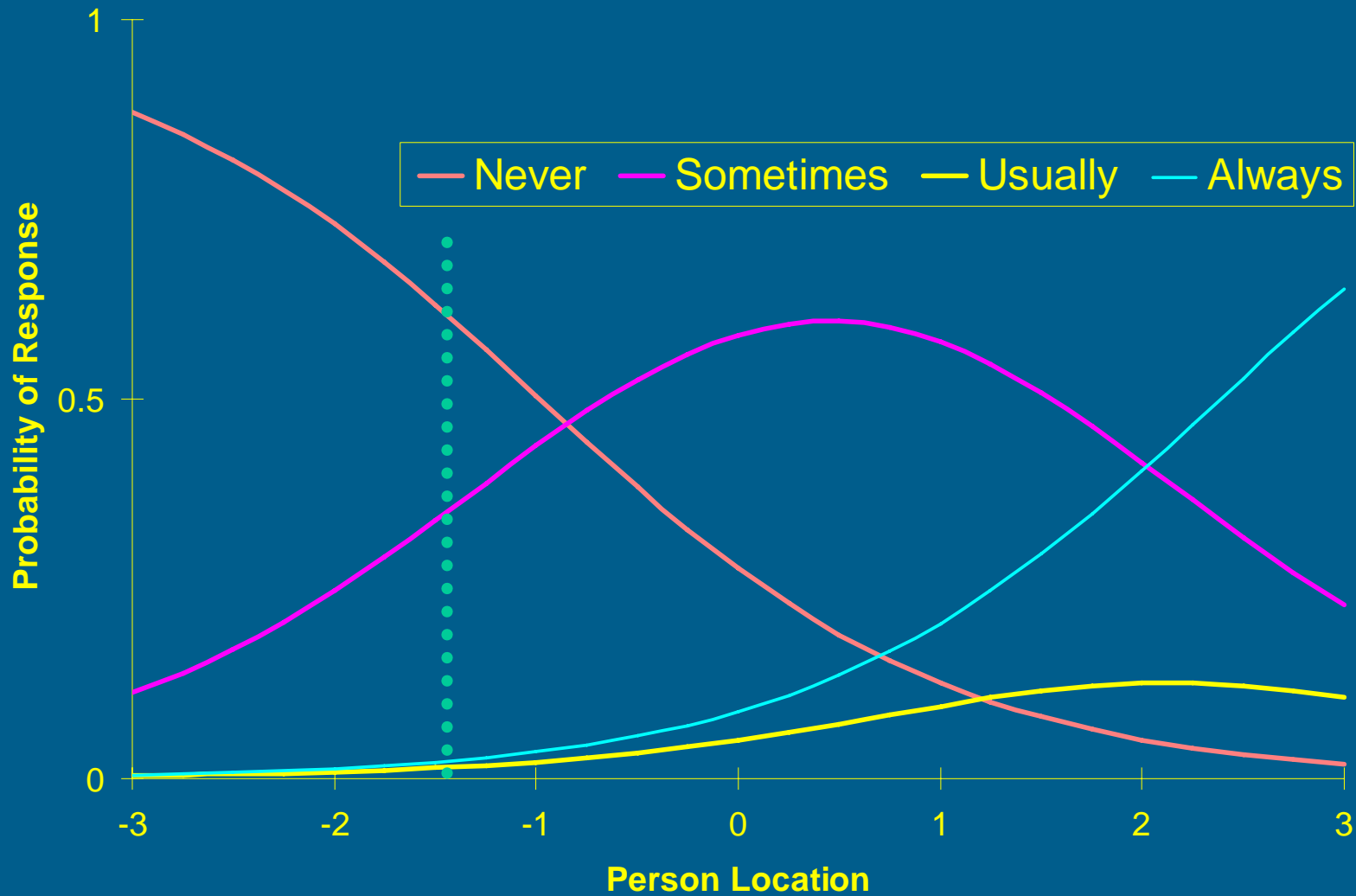
Understanding Thresholds



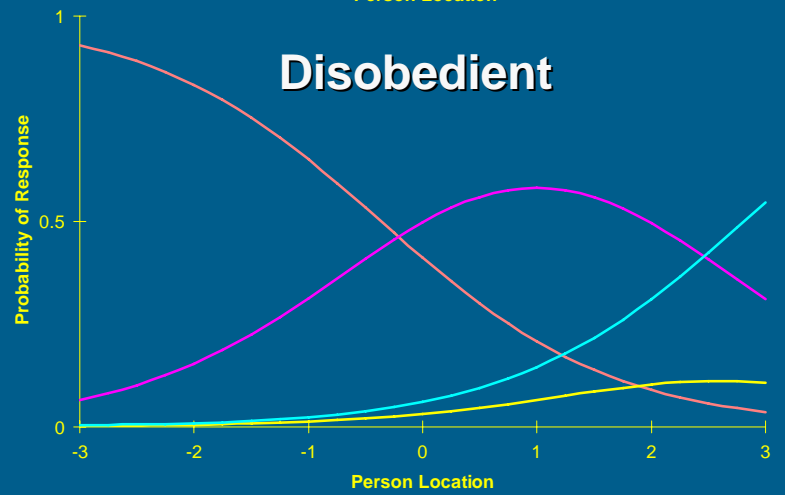
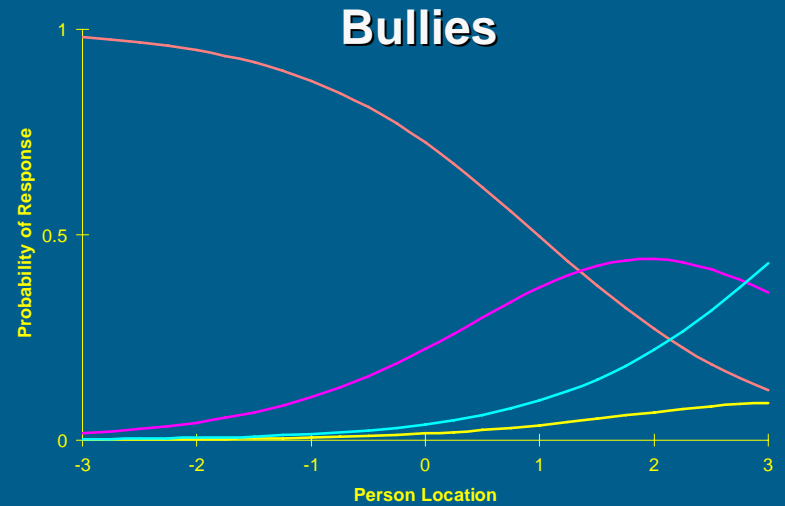
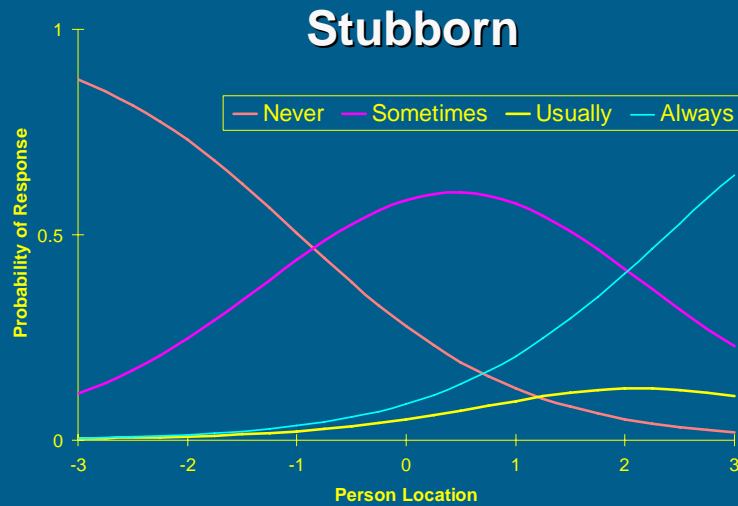
Graded Response Model Thresholds

	Between Never and Sometimes	Between Sometimes and Usually	Between Usually and Always
Social Skills Scale (discrimination parameter = 0.93)			
Gets along well with other children	- 3.60	- 1.76	- 0.37
Shows respect	- 3.00	- 1.92	- 0.92
Tries to understand other's feelings	- 2.73	- 0.89	0.18
Tries to resolve conflicts	- 2.23	- 0.61	0.48
Behavior Problems Scale (discrimination parameter = 0.98)			
Stubborn, sullen, or irritable	- 0.98	1.87	2.39
Bullies	0.99	2.92	3.29
Argues too much	- 1.14	1.22	1.74
Disobedient	- 0.36	2.35	2.81

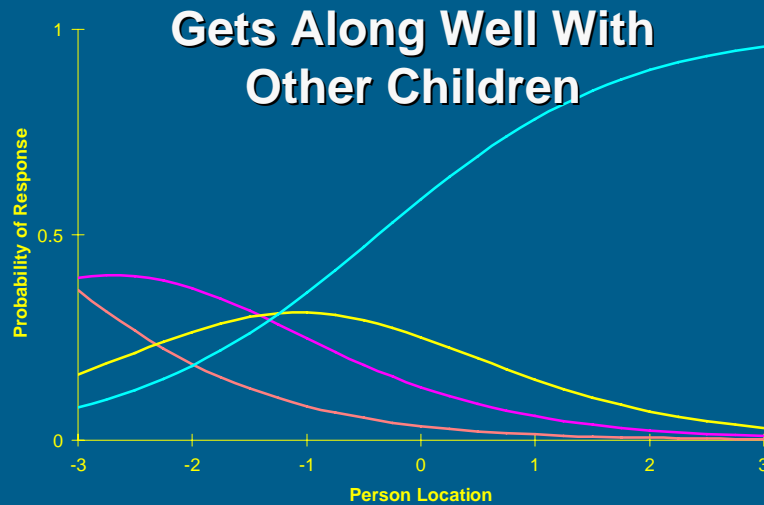
Probability Curve (“Stubborn”)



Probability Curves (Behavior Problems Scale)



Probability Curves (Social Skills Scale)



NSCH Social Competence Scale

- Age-related differences
 - Older children had lower mean levels of behavior problems than did younger children
 - No significant difference on social skills
- Sex-related differences
 - Boys had greater mean levels of behavior problems than did girls
 - No significant difference on social skills
- Configural invariance and equivalence of thresholds were tested across sex and age (6-11 vs. 12-17).
 - No differential item functioning

NSCH Social Competence Scale

- Raw scale scores are sufficient for capturing all of the information provided by the IRT-based scale scores.
 - $r = .95$ for both scales

Never = 1

Sometimes = 2

Usually = 3

Always = 4

Construct Validity

- Social skills scale scores and behavior problem scale scores are related to:
 - **Doctor diagnosis of behavioral or conduct problems**
 - **Extent to which child's mental or emotional health puts a burden on the family**
 - **Reports that child has a chronic emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem for which treatment is needed**
 - **Severity of difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior, or getting along with others**
 - **Number of times school has contacted parent in past year because of problems in school**
 - **Doctor diagnosis of ADD/ADHD**

Construct Validity

- Behavior problem scale scores are related to:
 - **Parental reports of aggravation with parenting**
 - **Parental reports of difficulty coping with the day-to-day demands of parenthood**
- Social skills scale scores are related to:
 - **Number of child's friends that parent has met**

[An Indicator of Child Well-Being?]

- Data must be gathered on a regular basis and permit geographically detailed analyses
- Measure is efficient to collect
- The items are clear, face valid, and readily understood
- Measure can identify if negative outcomes have been prevented
- Measure can identify if worthwhile goals have been achieved

[An Indicator of Child Well-Being?]

- Valid across gender and a substantial span of child ages
- Valid across other demographic subgroups
- Valid and reliable over time
- Sensitive to change in underlying trait score
- Criterion-based cutoff scores

[For More Information...]

- Stephen Blumberg
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road, Room 2112
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782
- sblumberg@cdc.gov