

**Research Digest**  
**Bullying and School Violence**

**Viljoen, J. L., O'Neill, M., & Sidhu, A. (2005).** Bullying behaviors in male and female young offenders: Prevalence, types, and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Aggressive Behavior*, 1-16.

Past empirical studies have demonstrated that bullying is not only a serious concern among youth but also can have severe impacts on childhood development. Bullying is often defined as a division of peer aggression in which one or more individuals verbally, physically and/or psychologically harass a weaker victim (p. 16). Given the lack of research on bullying within samples of incarcerated adolescents, the researchers in this study investigated the characteristics of bullies and victims among incarcerated adolescent offenders, both male and female. Unlike other studies, this study examined types of bullying in individuals who are both bullies and victims, and investigated the relationship of bullying and victimization to previous victimization while in custody, family and school connectedness, emotional and physical health concerns, and psychological adjustment. This study is one of the few North American studies on prison bullying (p. 12).

The study took place within nine young offender facilities in British Columbia with a sample of 244 ranging in age from 13 to 19. The participants were given surveys to determine victimization while in custody, demographic characteristics, relationship experiences, and psychological adjustment. The youth questionnaires stated “bullying” rather than purely objective definitions (a controversial form to take in such a study); however, self-reported bullying fell at the high end of the range reported by previous research. In addition, the results found a higher proportion of females were involved in bullying and acting as bullies than males. Males tended to use physical and verbal forms of bullying while females used verbal. Females were more likely than males to report being pure victims and being bullied by sexual touching and comments.

The current research is limited in its scope in that it did not investigate indirect aggression and causality of bullying. However, it emphasizes the need for treatment interventions for victims and perpetrators. Given the prevalence and serious consequences of bullying, it may be important to develop anti-bullying policies for juvenile detention facilities. Currently no North American detention facilities mandate anti-bullying policies.