Bullying in Prisons: the Importance of Perceived Social Status, Prisonization

and Moral Disengagement

Catherine R. South and Dr. Jane Wood

Department of Psychology, University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom.

Research has focused on the environmental causes of bullying in prison, but neglected the
intrinsic characteristics of bullies. Although the importance of social status in prison has
been noted as one factor that may influence bullying, no empirical research has yet
addressed this. The main aim of this study was to investigate whether the perceived
importance of social status in prison motivates bullying, with the subsidiary aim of
exploring whether moral disengagement and prisonization influence the relationship. One
hundred and thirty two adult male prisoners were interviewed and categorised as a bully,
victim, bully/victim or not involved. The prevalence of bullying was high, with over half
the prisoners being both a victim and perpetrator of bullying. As predicted, bullying was
positively related to the perceived importance of social status; prisoners involved in
bullying valued social status more than those who were not. Furthermore, moral
disengagement mediated the relationship between bullying and social status. Prisonization
was also related to the perceived importance of social status, moral disengagement and
bullying. It is concluded that the desire to attain social status in prison may motivate
bullying, but that prisonization may instil values such as social status into prisoners and
equip them with cognitive facilitators such as moral disengagement to make bullying
possible.

Key words: bullying behaviour; social status; moral disengagement; prisonization.

Correspondence to: Rebecca South, The Bracton Centre, Bracton Lane, Leyton Cross
Road, Dartford, Kent, DA2 7AP, UK (e-mail: Rebecca.South@oxleas.nhs.uk).

Bullying in Prisons: the Importance of Perceived Social Status, Prisonization

and Moral Disengagement

Research has focused on the environmental causes of bullying in prison, but neglected the intrinsic characteristics of bullies. Although the importance of social status in prison has been noted as one factor that may influence bullying, no empirical research has yet addressed this. The main aim of this study was to investigate whether the perceived importance of social status in prison motivates bullying, with the subsidiary aim of exploring whether moral disengagement and prisonization influence the relationship. One hundred and thirty two adult male prisoners were interviewed and categorised as a bully, victim, bully/victim or not involved. The prevalence of bullying was high, with over half the prisoners being both a victim and perpetrator of bullying. As predicted, bullying was positively related to the perceived importance of social status; prisoners involved in bullying valued social status more than those who were not. Furthermore, moral disengagement mediated the relationship between bullying and social status. Prisonization was also related to the perceived importance of social status, moral disengagement and bullying. It is concluded that the desire to attain social status in prison may motivate bullying, but that prisonization may instil values such as social status into prisoners and equip them with cognitive facilitators such as moral disengagement to make bullying possible.

INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen a surge of interest regarding bullying amongst prisoners [Ireland, 2000; Levenson, 2000]. In 1999, the requirement that all prisons should have an anti-bullying strategy became mandatory [Home Office Prison Service, 1999], demonstrating a commitment to deal with bullying nationwide. However, many questions still remain unanswered regarding bullying in prison.

Bullying is a subsection of aggressive behaviour, which is subject to a number of definitions [Ireland et al., 1999]. Although several researchers have defined bullying, most share the 5 key elements identified by Farrington [1993] that it must (a) involve a physical, verbal or psychological attack, (b) involve an imbalance of power, (c) be unprovoked, (d) be repeated and (e) be intended to cause fear or harm to the victim. However, there are problems with applying such a definition to a prison sample [Ireland and Ireland, 2003].

Firstly, the repetition of an aggressive act may be impeded by the rapid movement of prisoners to other wings and establishments [Beck and Ireland, 1995]. Further, the fear of repeated aggression may be more important than the actual incidence [Randall, 1997]. Other difficulties surround behaviours that are specific to prisoners, which do not start off involving an imbalance of power, such as 'baroning' whereby goods are lent to prisoners and repayment is demanded with higher rates of interest [Ireland and Archer, 1996]. Initially, individuals voluntarily enter into this relationship. However, failure to repay loans can result in extortion and control of the victim, [Ireland and Ireland, 2003]. Definitions of bullying also need to include the aggressive behaviours considered to represent bullying which vary from direct physical, verbal and sexual abuse through to more indirect forms of bullying such as gossiping, ostracising and rumour spreading [Ireland and Archer, 1996].

In view of such difficulties, the current study adopted the broader definition proposed by Ireland [1999c] which states:

"An individual is being bullied when they are the victim of direct and/or indirect aggression happening on a weekly basis, by the same or different perpetrator(s). Single incidences of aggression can also be viewed as bullying, particularly those that are severe and where the individual either believes or fears that they are at risk of future victimization by the same perpetrator or others." (p. 2)

Bullying impacts upon individuals [Blaauw et al., 2001] and the prison, creating disruptions that allow inmates to gain power and subvert prison rules [Home Office Prison Service, 1993]. However, bullying poses problems beyond the confines of the establishment. If bullies are not challenged about their behaviour they may learn that exploitation is a valuable strategy and so are unlikely to live law-abiding lives on release [Levenson, 2000]. Therefore, it is important to better understand bullying behaviour so that interventions can be targeted appropriately.

Attempts to explain prison bullying have largely been explicated through environmental causes, namely the deprivation of material goods [Ireland, 2000], high population density [Levenson, 2000], hierarchical structure of prisons [Ireland, 2000], inmate subculture [Ireland, 2002b] and the attitudes of peer groups [Ireland, 2000]. However, environmental factors alone cannot account for bullying since not all prisoners are involved. The environment may provide the conditions to reinforce bullying, whilst individual characteristics are perhaps the determining factor [Ireland, 2002a].

There is a paucity of empirical research into the intrinsic characteristics of prisoners who bully. Research has considered demographic characteristics such as age, offence type and criminal history [Ireland, 2001; O'Donnell and Edgar, 1998b], but much of this is limited to young offenders [Beck, 1994] and relies on prisoners' perceptions of bullies [Power et al., 1997]. Other research has found that compared to victims, bullies hold a more positive belief about the use of aggression [Ireland and Archer, 2002], hold more

negative attitudes towards victims [Ireland, 1999b] are less empathetic [Ireland, 1997] and are more likely to respond aggressively to conflict situations [Ireland, 2002b]. While these factors may facilitate such behaviour, they fail to address the motivation behind bullying.

Bullying is a social phenomenon [Salmivalli et al., 1996]. It was once said that societies based on capitalist economic structures "are concerned only with winners, with little interest in those who are disadvantaged" [Gilbert, 1994, p. 371]. Bullying is one way in which an individual can be regarded as a winner [Ireland, 2000]. As Ireland [2002b] states:

> "Status is a valuable commodity in a prison in that it enables prisoners who possess it to make demands of those who do not and secure greater access to resources. Successfully bullying others is one way of guaranteeing status among peers." (p. 89)

Social hierarchy seem to be inherent in the prison system and prisons appear to be encouraging such a social system as bullies are given high status by both prisoners and staff [Ireland, 2002b]. Hierarchies also feature in the prisoner sub-culture where it is important to be able to dominate others if acceptance and status are to be gained [Ireland and Ireland, 2003]. One personal characteristic behind bullying may be the perceived need to gain social status in prison

The main aim of this study was to investigate whether the perceived importance of social status in prison motivates bullying, with the subsidiary aim of exploring whether moral disengagement and prisonization influence the relationship.

Moral disengagement

It has been considered whether delinquency is associated with less advanced levels of moral reasoning [Blasi, 1980]. However, no clear relationship has been established [Jennings et al., 1983]. Another aspect of morality that may be relevant to bullying is moral

disengagement, which involves the "cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct into a benign or worthy behaviour" [Bandura, 2002, p. 101].

In the social cognitive theory of the moral self [Bandura, 1991], "moral agency is manifested in both the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely and the proactive power to behave humanely" [Bandura, 1999, p. 1]. There are 8 mechanisms by which moral self-sanctions are selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct [Bandura, 1999, 2002].

The most powerful set of disengagement practices redefine harmful behaviour as worthy by use of moral justifications, sanitising language and exonerating social comparisons. Another set of disengagement mechanisms minimise the role of the perpetrator through diffusion and displacement of responsibility, distorting or disregarding the effects of one's actions and through the attribution of blame and dehumanisation of the victim [Bandura, 2002].

Moral disengagement has been found to influence aggressive and delinquent behaviour both directly and by reducing prosocial behaviour, guilt and by fostering aggression [Bandura, 1999, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996]. However, research needs to explore how this aspect of morality may influence prison bullying.

A limited number of European studies has considered the use of moral disengagement amongst children in bullying situations [Menesini et al., 2003]. Children show higher levels of moral disengagement emotions and motives when asked to put themselves in the role of the bully compared with a victim or an outsider [Menesini et al., 2003]. However, no study has addressed whether prisoners who bully have high levels of moral disengagement, which one would expect in order for them to engage in such behaviour.

Prisonization

Prisonization refers to "the adoption of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the inmate subculture" [Clemmer, 1940, p. 270]. The process of prisonization is not determined by a single factor but governed by the interaction between deprivation in the prison environment [Paterline and Petersen, 1999] and the importation of pre-prison experiences into the inmate subculture [Zingraff, 1980].

Prisonization influences the behaviour and relationships between prisoners [Wing, 2003]. Inmates who embrace the social hierarchy of the prison culture and strongly identify with inmate norms may be more likely to value social status, because maintaining one's own position in the prison society is a central aspect of prisonization [Paterline and Petersen, 1999].

Research also suggests that the inmate subculture is important in explaining bullying behaviour [Ireland, 2000]. Individuals who are not integrated into an inmate "social system", such as a gang, and live on the periphery of the inmate subculture with non-conformist attitudes, increase their risk of being bullied [Wooldredge, 1998]. Therefore, being a victim of bullying may be more common for inmates who show higher levels of institutional maladjustment. Similarly, bullying may be more prevalent amongst inmates who are prisonized and who bully as a source of social psychological gratification.

The present study explored the relationship between bullying, the perceived importance of social status, moral disengagement and prisonization. The primary aim was to explore whether the desire to attain and maintain social status in prison relates to bullying. We predicted that prisoners involved in bullying would value social status more than prisoners who are not.

The study also investigated whether moral disengagement and prisonization mediate the relationship between bullying and social status. It was predicted that prisoners

involved in bullying would show higher levels of moral disengagement compared to prisoners not involved. Further, it was predicted that moral disengagement would positively relate to the perceived importance of social status, since prisoners with strong beliefs about social status may morally disengage to maintain this belief. If this is the case, then we expected that moral disengagement would mediate the relationship between bullying and social status.

We also predicted that prisoners who show high levels of prisonization were more likely to value the importance of social status in prison and also be more involved in bullying than those who are less prisonized. In this way, prisonization may mediate the relationship between bullying behaviour and social status. Furthermore, it was also important to address demographic variables, which may relate to bullying behaviour.

METHOD

Participants

Initially 149 male prisoners were approached to take part in the study, of which 3 refused and 14 were later removed from the analyses as they had been at the establishment for less than 2 months. The final sample comprised 132 adult male prisoners from 6 prisons across 3 counties in the U.K. Sixty three were from 3 category B prisons (medium security level), 31 were from a category C prison (medium/low security) and 38 were from 2 category D prisons (low security resettlement prisons). Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 69 years (M = 35.36, SD = 9.98); 70% were of white ethnic origin and 30% were of non-white ethnic origin. The entire sample was sentenced: 30% were serving for a drug related offence, 29 % for a violent offence, 28% for an acquisitive offence and 13% for other offences (e.g. firearm offences, deception). The average sentence length was 7.07 years (SD = 4.75).

Measures

Demographic questions. Prisoners were asked to report their age, offence, ethnic origin, sentence length, age of first conviction, time spent in the current prison, number of times they had moved prisons during this sentence, number of times they had been in prison in their lifetime and the total time they had spent in penal establishments.

Organizational Structure and Prisonization Scale [OSPS Thomas and Zingraff, 1974]. The OSPS comprises 8 statements relating to how prisoners feel about being in prison, such as "It's a good idea to keep yourself to yourself in prison as much as you can". Prisoners rated how much they agreed with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ('strongly disagree' 'disagree' 'neither agree nor disagree' 'agree' and 'strongly agree'). This scale had moderate reliability (Alpha = 0.66).

Direct and Indirect Prisoner Behaviour Checklist [DIPC Ireland, 1999a]. The DIPC measures direct and indirect forms of bullying. Only items measuring direct bullying were included; thus 25 questions addressed behaviours experienced by prisoners in the past 6 months such as, "Other prisoners have threatened me with violence", and 26 questions concerned behaviours that they had engaged in, for example, "I have verbally threatened another prisoner". On a 5-point Likert scale prisoners rated how many times they had experienced or engaged in a behaviour ranging from 'never' to 'more than 20 times'. The items had high internal consistency for both victims' (Alpha = 0.84) and perpetrators' (Alpha = 0.90) reports of bullying. On the basis of the DIPC, prisoners were classified into four bully categories. If they reported at least one 'bully' item and no 'victim' items they were classified as 'pure bullies'; if they reported at least one 'bully' item and one 'victim' item they were classified 'bully/victims'; if they reported at least one 'victim' item and no 'bully' items they were classified 'pure victims'; and if they reported no 'bully' or 'victim' items they were classified as 'not involved' [Ireland, 1999b].

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale [Bandura et al., 1996]. The moral disengagement scale consists of 32 items, with each of the eight mechanisms represented by a subset of four items. This study used a late version of the scale [Bandura et al., 2001] which required prisoners to rate their degree of acceptance of moral exonerations on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The wording in 17 of the items was adjusted for adult prisoners as the original scale was designed for children [Bandura et al., 1996]. For example, "Insults among children do not hurt anyone" was adapted to, "Insults among prisoners do not hurt anyone". Reliability analyses confirmed that the scale had high internal consistency (Alpha = 0.90).

Social Status Scale. Currently, there is no recognised scale for measuring importance of social status. A questionnaire was created to assess the importance prisoners attach to social status. Eleven items were constructed concerning dominance and respect since previous research reveals these as important aspects of bullying in prison [Ireland, 2000]. Items included for example, "It is important to me that I am respected by other prisoners". The word 'status' was not included in any of the questions because of its subjectivity. Prisoners rated on a 5-point Likert scale how much they agreed with the statements from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The items had good internal consistency (Alpha = 0.75).

To assess any discrepancy between prisoners' perceived and desired status, an adapted version of the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status [Adler et al., 2000] was used. The instrument comprises a drawing of a ladder with a visual 10-point scale from the bottom to the top. Prisoners rated where they believed their social status ranking fell on the scale and also where they would like to be. The score representing where prisoners felt they were on the ladder of social status was later subtracted from that representing where

prisoners aspired to be. The greater the value, the more dissatisfied they were with their perceived status in prison.

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale [Crowne and Marlowe, 1960]. This study relies on self-report so it was necessary to identify participants who may show a tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner. The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale consists of 33 items describing both acceptable but improbable behaviours, and items deemed unacceptable but probable, such as "There have been times when I took advantage of someone". Prisoners rated on a 5-point Likert scale how much they agreed with each statement. The items had high internal consistency (Alpha = 0.82).

Procedure

A representative sample of prisoners was obtained using O'Mahony's [1997] quasi-random method, whereby every fifth individual from a list of inmates was selected from each prison.

Questionnaires were administered by interview, so as not to eliminate prisoners with literacy difficulties, to avoid poor response rates and ensure that prisoners had the opportunity to ask questions. The interviews took place in a quiet room, without the presence of any staff in order to guarantee the confidentiality of each prisoner. Before the interview began, the consent form was read aloud to participants who were then asked to sign to confirm their voluntary participation. The form highlighted the nature of the research, the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and their right to withdraw at any time. Following the interview a de-brief sheet was read aloud to the participant who then kept a copy. The debrief reiterated the aims of the study and informed the participant how to withdraw from the study if they wanted to do so. It also provided a support line if they were distressed by any aspect of the interview.

Once all the interviews had been conducted the results were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analyses and multivariate statistics in SPSS.

RESULTS

Classification

Out of 132 prisoners 84 (63.6%) reported being a perpetrator of bullying whilst 106 (80.3%) reported being a victim of bullying in the last 6 months. To establish whether there was a relationship between being a perpetrator and a victim of bullying, a Pearson's Product Moment correlation analysis was conducted using prisoners' total bullying and total victimisation scores. Perpetration of bullying positively related to being a victim of bullying, $r(130) = .41$, $p < .001$. Table I shows the frequency and percentage of prisoners in the four classifications of bullying.

Demographic Variables

A one-way GLM analysis was conducted on all continuous demographic variables, with bullying classification as the independent variable. The variables included; age, length of sentence, time spent in the current prison, number of times a prisoner had moved prisons during this sentence, number of times they had been in prison, age of first conviction, and the total time spent in penal establishments. The main effect of age of first conviction was significant, $F(3, 128) = 5.88$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$, power $= .95$. Post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD found that pure victims were older (M = 28.23, SD = 14.87) at first conviction than bully/victims (M = 20.12, SD = 7.80, p < .01). The difference between pure bullies (M = 18.67, SD = 6.25) and pure victims (M = 28.23, SD = 14.87) was only marginally significant, (p = .065).

There was also a significant main effect of the total time spent in prison, $F(3, 128) = 5.55$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$, power $= .94$. Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed that bully/victims had spent more time in a prison (M = 7.32, SD = 6.61) than pure victims (M

= 3.30, SD = 3.18, p < .01), and those not-involved (M = 2.83, SD = 3.04, p < .05). Pure bullies did not differ from other categories although the average amount of time they had spent in a prison was the longest (M = 8.29, SD = 9.39). None of the remaining main effects was significant.

To see if there were differences in bullying involvement with respect to type of offence, offences were categorised as either violent (e.g. murder, GBH) or non-violent (e.g. deception, fraud). An independent samples t-test revealed no differences in bullying involvement according to type of offence, t(130) = -.80, p = .43. Similarly, an independent samples t-test revealed no difference between white and non-white ethnic origins in their involvement in bullying, t(130) = -1.20, p = .23.

It was also interesting to note that the perceived importance of social status in prison was correlated with the number of times the person had been in prison, r(130) = .19, p < .05, age of first conviction, r(130) = -.19, p < .05, and the total time spent in penal establishments, r(130) = .19, p < .05.

Hypothesis 1: Bullying and the Perceived Importance of Social Status

Bullying was positively related to the perceived importance of social status in prison, r(130) = .32, p < .001. However, being a victim of bullying also had a positive relationship with the perceived importance of social status, r(130) = .21, p < .05. Therefore, a one-way GLM analysis was conducted on social status scores, with bullying classification as the independent variable. The main effect of bullying classification was significant, F(3, 128) = 5.22, p < .01, η^2 = .11, power = .92. A post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD found that bully/victims valued social status more (M = 30.51, SD = 5.24) than pure victims (M = 27.45, SD = 4.37) or those not-involved (M = 26.18, SD = 4.36, p < .05). Pure victims and those not-involved only differed from bully/victims, and pure bullies (M = 29.33, SD = 4.74) did not differ from any other group.

Hypothesis 2: Bullying and Moral Disengagement

Total bullying scores positively related to levels of moral disengagement, $r(130) =$ .31, $p < .001$. A one-way GLM analysis was conducted on moral disengagement scores, with bullying classification as the independent variable. The main effect of bullying classification was significant, $F(3, 128) = 6.01$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$, power $= .95$. A post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD revealed that pure bullies ($M = 86.78$, $SD = 10.52$) and bully/victims ($M = 84.05$, $SD = 15.07$) had higher levels of moral disengagement than pure victims ($M = 72.00$, SD 14.30, $p < .05$) although pure bullies and bully/victims did not differ from each other. Prisoners classified as not-involved ($M = 77.41$, $SD = 12.41$) did not differ from any other category.

Hypothesis 3: Moral Disengagement and the Perceived Importance of Social Status

Moral disengagement positively related to the perceived importance of social status, $r(130) = .53$, $p < .001$. In view of this, and the relationship found between bullying and moral disengagement, a mediational analysis was carried out to examine whether moral disengagement mediates the relationship between bullying and social status. All four criteria of regression were met in the absence of multicollinearity; bullying behaviour had a significant bivariate relationship with moral disengagement and with social status, and moral disengagement predicted social status independently of bullying (See Figure 1). Finally, as indicated by the Sobel z-test, when controlling for moral disengagement a significant change was found in the relationship between bullying and the perceived importance of social status ($z = 3.17$, $p < .01$) demonstrating that moral disengagement mediates the relationship. All these results were consistent with a pattern of partial mediation, whereby moral disengagement partially accounts for the relationship between bullying and the perceived importance of social status, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 4: Prisonization, Social Status and Bullying

Prisonization had a positive relationship with the perceived importance of social status, $r(130) = .23$, $p < .01$. However, prisonization was not related to total bullying scores, $r(130) = .14$, $p = .12$, or total victimisation scores, $r(130) = -.05$, $p = .60$. Therefore, prisonization cannot mediate the relationship between bullying and the perceived importance of social status. Furthermore, prisonization did not moderate the relationship as regression analyses revealed that there was no interaction between bullying behaviour and prisonization on the importance of social status (interaction $\beta = -.13$, $p = .16$). However, a univariate GLM was conducted on prisonization with bullying classification as the independent variable. Although the main effect of prisonization was only marginally significant, $F(3, 128) = 2.49$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .06$, power $= .61$, a post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD found that pure bullies had higher levels of prisonization ($M = 29.89$, $SD = 3.98$) than pure victims ($M = 25.61$, $SD = 4.89$, $p < .05$). Prisonization also had a positive relationship with moral disengagement, $r(130) = .51$, $p < .001$.

Further analyses

The adapted MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000) measured the discrepancy between where prisoners perceive they are in the social hierarchy of prison, and where they would like to be. This measure did not relate to the perceived importance of social status, $\underline{r}(130) = .07$, $p = .41$, or with other variables that correlated with status such as bullying, $r(130) = -.06$, $p = .51$, moral disengagement, $r(130) = .05$, $p = .54$), or prisonization, $r(130) = .12$, $p = .16$. However, this measure had a positive relationship with being a victim of bullying, $r(130) = .44$, $p < .001$. Prisoners who have more experience of being a victim of bullying are more dissatisfied with their position in the social hierarchy of prison and would like to have a higher social status than they believe

they do. Experience of being a victim was also related to the number of times people had moved prisons during their sentence, $r(130) = .28$, $p < .01$.

Further analyses also revealed that social desirability had a negative relationship with all the main variables; total bullying involvement, $r(103) = -.35$, $p < .001$, total victimisation score, $r(130) = -.27$, $p < .01$, the perceived importance of social status, $r(130) = -.21$, $p < .05$, moral disengagement, $r(130) = -.35$, $p < .001$, and prisonization, $r(130) = -.21$, $p < .05$. This shows that prisoners who are involved in bullying, are highly prisonized, value status and morally disengage tend not to respond in a socially desirable way.

DISCUSSION

Despite attempts to curb bullying in prisons, this study reveals it is still a pervasive problem. Of the 132 prisoners interviewed, 63.6% reported being a perpetrator of bullying while 80.3% had been a victim in the previous six months. These high estimates may be because prisoners only had to admit to one item on either scale to be classified as a perpetrator or victim of bullying. Measures that avoid using the emotive term 'bullying' are also known to produce higher victim and bully estimates than other methods [Beck and Smith, 1995]. However, these estimates only reflect prisoners who actually admitted to bullying behaviour; the true prevalence may in fact be higher as some prisoners may have been reluctant to report behaviours indicative of bullying.

Consistent with previous research [Ireland, 1999c, Ireland and Archer, 2002], bully/victims in the current study were the largest group. Bully/victims have also been considered the most interesting category since they represent individuals who may be reacting to their own victimization by bullying others [Ireland, 1997]. The relationship between prisoners' bullying, and their experience of being a victim further illustrates that prisoners who bully and prisoners who are bullied are not polar opposites but should be construed along a continuum of behaviour [Ireland, 2003].

Bully/victims had a significantly younger age of first conviction than pure victims, and pure bullies were younger than both bully/victims and pure victims. Furthermore, bully/victims had spent more time in prison than pure victims or those not-involved, and pure bullies had spent the longest time in prisons. These results complement past research, which has consistently found that bullies have more extensive criminal and institutional histories than their victims [O'Donnell and Edgar, 1998b; Power et al., 1997].

As predicted, bullying related positively to the perceived importance of social status in prison. Bully/victims valued social status more than pure victims or those not involved. Pure bullies may not have differed from other classifications because there were fewer of them. This suggests that the perceived importance of social status may be one factor upon which some bullying relationships are built. For example, O'Donnell and Edgar [1998a] identified four typologies of victimisers and found that the largest group were preoccupied with status, and driven by a need for recognition. The current findings also strengthen previous research that bullies value dominance [Ireland, 2000] and believe that they will be respected for behaving aggressively [Ireland and Archer, 2002].

Interestingly, bully/victims valued social status most. This may explain why there was a positive relationship between the perceived importance of social status and both bullying and being a victim. It was also found that the more experience prisoners have of being victimised the more dissatisfied they are with their perceived position in the social hierarchy of prison, desiring higher status than they believe they have. In contrast, involvement in bullying was not significantly correlated with any discrepancy between prisoners' perceived and desired status, although the relationship was negative. This suggests that, to some extent, the more bullying prisoners engage in, the more content they are with their perceived position in the hierarchy of prison, possibly because they have used bullying to achieve their status. It could be speculated that some prisoners who have been

victims of bullying are dissatisfied with their perceived status become involved in bullying in an attempt to enhance their status. In turn they become bully/victims. Prisoners who are both bullies and victims appear to value social status more than any other group including pure bullies, which suggests that bullying may be more important in attaining perceived social status, than maintaining it.

Bullying involvement was also positively related to moral disengagement. Pure bullies and bully/victims had higher levels of moral disengagement than pure victims. Although there was no difference between pure bullies and bully/victims, pure bullies displayed the highest level of moral disengagement followed by bully/victims then pure victims. This suggests that the ease with which people morally disengage may play a central role in bullying. Such findings are congruent with research that has established the role of moral disengagement in harmful and delinquent behaviour [Bandura et al., 1996, 2001]. Moral disengagement also appears to relate to bullying amongst children [Menesini et al., 2003]. However, this is the first empirical evidence to suggest that proclivity to morally disengage is systematically related to bullying involvement in prisons. This implies that it may not be an abnormal development of people's moral reasoning that contributes to such anti-social behaviour. Rather it seems to be the ease with which they can violate and disengage from their own moral standards that dictates behaviour.

Moral disengagement also related positively to the perceived importance of social status. Although the current results do not allow inferences of causation, individuals who aspire to a higher status appear to morally disengage to perhaps because of the behaviour they indulge in to achieve their aim of higher status. This is interesting because self-image, self-standards and a sense of self-worth are used in the normal self-regulation of behaviour [Anderson and Bushman, 2002]. The current results suggest that when a sense of social

status becomes important, the normal self-regulatory mechanisms of behaviour do not operate.

Furthermore, moral disengagement partially mediated the relationship between bullying behaviour and social status. It could be that the perceived importance of social status affects bullying involvement both directly and by increasing moral disengagement. This seems plausible given that prisoners who bully value status and morally disengage more than those who do not. However, mediation does not imply causation, so it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions, but it warrants further investigation.

As expected, prisonization was positively related to social status. This suggests that inmates immersed into the social hierarchy of prison life and inmate subculture are most likely to value the importance of social status. The perceived importance of social status was also related to the number of times people have been in prison, age of first conviction and the total time spent in penal establishments. This suggests that much like the process of prisonization [Paterline and Petersen, 1999], the extent to which inmates value status in prison may be governed by both personal characteristics and environmental factors. Both of which may develop across time.

Although prisonization did not relate to bullying, the results did find that pure bullies were more prisonized than pure victims. This supports Ireland's [2000] proposal that bullies are more prisonized than victims. The moderate reliability of the scale indicates that with a stronger reliability the difference between pure bullies and pure victims would be more pronounced and potentially prisonization would relate to bullying too. Nevertheless, given the number of pure bullies in the study, that they showed higher levels of prisonization than pure victims is promising. Another explanation for these findings could be that bully/victims are also prisonized and so prisonization related as much to victimisation as it did to bullying except in the purest forms. Similarly, values such as

status that may result from prisonization may be one determinant of bullying. Those who do not become prisonized may not adopt such values and may become attractive targets of bullying since they are socially distant from the prison's subculture [O'Donnell and Edgar, 1998b]. Being a victim of bullying also related to the number of times people have moved to other prisons. This suggests that some prisoners may not actively resist prisonization, but fail to spend enough time in establishments to have the chance of successful integration. However, this is speculative as research is limited in this area [Ireland, 2000] and further work is needed.

Prisonization was positively related to moral disengagement. Socialisation normally enables individuals to adopt moral standards that serve as guides and deterrents for behaviour [Bandura, 1991]. It could be that socialisation such as prisonization, not only affects values such as social status, but can also have detrimental effects on moral standards and the ease with which people morally disengage. Similarly, it could be that only those who have already disengaged in a moral sense are likely to become involved in the prison's subculture.

Social desirability had a negative association with all the main variables. This implies that prisoners involved in bullying, are highly prisonized, value status and morally disengage tend not to offer socially desirable responses. Prisoners who are immersed into this network of behaviours may not need approval from external sources as the very nature of these behaviours satisfies their need for approval by inmate peers. Other prisoners may show a greater propensity to supply interviewers with favourable images of themselves because they are not immersed into the prison lifestyle, and do desire acceptance. Alternatively, the levels of bullying, prisonization, status value and moral disengagement may be higher than this study's findings imply. This could be because those who claim not

to be involved in such behaviour were more interested in providing a socially desirable response to the interviewer than revealing factual accounts of their behaviour.

These findings have the potential to offer innovative ideas for dealing with prison bullying. If perceived social status is important for bullies and even more so for bully/victims, interventions need to recognise this and consider the need for perceived social status into intervention programmes. Furthermore, moral disengagement appears to play a significant role in bullying. If moral disengagement facilitates bullying, it needs to be made more difficult for people to remove humanity from their conduct (Bandura, 2002). In support of this, previous research has successfully enhanced moral engagement against destructive means in children by peer modelling [McAlister et al., 1999].

One main limitation with this study is in accurately measuring bullying in prisons. Prisoners may not feel that the behaviours they report are indicative of bullying. Moreover, the way in which prisoners are pigeonholed into bullying categories using the DIPC may have lead to misrepresentations, such as wrongly labelling prisoners, who have acted aggressively in self-defence, as bullies. Furthermore, it is unknown to what extent prisoners were reporting their behaviour and experiences honestly. One inevitable consequence of interviewing is that inmates may be more reluctant to admit to bullying behaviour and the social desirability measures seem to indicate this.

This research has moved beyond a purely descriptive analysis of bullying to reveal that the desire to attain social status in prison may be one intrinsic characteristic that motivates bullying. This study also suggests that prisonization is important in influencing how much people value social status and the ease with which people morally disengage, and also that moral disengagement facilitates bullying. Research would benefit from exploring whether prisonization is the driving force behind bullying by instilling values such as social status into prisoners and equipping them with cognitive facilitators such as

moral disengagement to make bullying possible. Bullying is one of the largest challenges facing the Prison Service. It is important that research continues to identify the individual determinants of bullying, not only for reducing bullying in prisons but also to prevent continued exploitation of people upon release.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

Adler NE, Epel ES, Castellazzo G, Ickovics JR. 2000. Relationship of subjective and objective social status with psychological and physiological functioning: preliminary data in healthy white women. Health Psychology 19:586-592.

Anderson CA, Bushman BJ. 2002. Human Aggression. Annual Review of Psychology 53:27-51.

Bandura A. 1991. Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. In: Kurtines WM, Gewirtz JL, editors. Handbook of Moral Behaviour and Development: theory, research, and applications. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. p 71-129.

Bandura A. 1999. Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities [Special Issue on Evil and Violence]. Personality and Social Psychology Review 3:193-209.

Bandura A. 2002. Selective Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency. Journal of Moral Education 31(2):101-119.

Bandura A, Barbaranelli C, Caprara GV, Pastorelli C. 1996. Mechanisms of moral

disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. Journal of Personality and Social

Psychology 71:364-374.

Bandura A, Caprara GV, Barbaranelli C, Pastorelli C, Regalia C. 2001. Sociocognitive

Self-Regulatory Mechanisms Governing Transgressive Behaviour. Journal of

Personality and Social Psychology 80(1):125-135.

Beck G.1994. Self-reported bullying among Scottish young offenders. Inside Psychology

2:16-21.

Beck G, Ireland J. 1995. Measuring bullying in prisons. Paper presented at the 1995 Fifth

Annual Division of Criminological and Legal Psychology Conference. Newbold

Revel, London, UK.

Beck G, Smith PK. 1995. An alternative assessment of the prevalence of bullying among

young offenders. In: Beck G, Ireland J, editors. Measuring bullying in prisons.

Paper presented at the 1995 Fifth Annual Division of Criminological and Legal

Psychology Conference, Newbold Revel, London, UK.

Blaauw E, Winkel FW, Kerkhof JFM. 2001. Bullying and Suicidal Behaviour in Jails.

Criminal Justice and Behaviour 28(3):279-299.

Blasi A. 1980. Bridging moral cognition and moral action: A critical review of the

literature. Psychological Bulletin 88:1-45.

Clemmer D. 1940. The Prison Community. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Crowne DP, Marlowe D. 1960. A New Scale of Social Desirability Independent of

Psychopathology. Journal of Consulting Psychology 24:349-354.

Farrington DP. 1993. Understanding and preventing bullying. In: Tonry M. editor. Crime

and Justice: A Review of Research. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p.

381-458.

Gilbert P. 1994. Male violence: Towards an integration. In: Archer J. editor. Male violence. London: Routledge. p 352-389.

Home Office Prison Service. 1993. Bullying in prison: A strategy to beat it. London: HMSO.

Home Office Prison Service. 1999. Anti-bullying strategy. Prison Service Order no.1702.

Ireland JL. 1997. Bullying amongst prisoners: A study of gender differences, provictim attitudes and empathy. Unpublished MSc Dissertation. Manchester Metropolitan University: UK.

Ireland JL. 1999a. Bullying amongst prisoners: A study of adults and young offenders. Aggressive Behaviour 25(3):162–178.

Ireland JL. 1999b. Provictim attitudes and empathy in relation to bullying behaviour among prisoners. Legal and Criminological Psychology 4:51–66.

Ireland JL. 1999c. Identifying the victims of bullying in a prison environment: A study of personal and behavioural characteristics. Paper presented at the Division of Forensic Psychology annual conference, Cambridge University, UK.

Ireland JL. 2000. Bullying among prisoners: A review of research. Aggression and Violent Behaviour 5(2):201–215.

Ireland JL. 2001. Bullying behaviour among male and female adult prisoners: a study of perpetrator and victim characteristics. Legal and Criminological Psychology 6:229-246.

Ireland JL. 2002a. Bullying in prisons. The Psychologist 15(3):130-133.

Ireland JL. 2002b. Bullying Among Prisoners: Evidence, Research and Intervention Strategies. London, UK: Brunner-Routledge.

Ireland JL. 2003. Working with Bullies and their Victims. Bullying in Prisons. In: Towl G. editor. Psychology in Prisons. BPS: Blackwell. p 148-158.

Ireland JL, Archer J. 1996. Descriptive Analysis of Bullying in Male and Female Adult
Prisoners. Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology 6:35-47.

Ireland JL, Archer J. 2002. The perceived consequences of responding to bullying with
aggression: A study of male and female adult prisoners. Aggressive Behaviour
28(4):257–272.

Ireland JL, Ireland CA. 2003. How do offenders define bullying? A study of adult, young
and juvenile male offenders. Legal and Criminological Psychology 8:159-173.

Ireland JL, Jarvis S, Beck GB, Osiowy S. 1999. Bullying in prison: A review of recent
research. Forensic Update 56:4–9.

Jennings WS, Kilkenny R, Kohlberg L. 1983. Moral-development theory and practice for
youthful and adult offenders. In: Laufer WS, Day JM, editors. Personality theory,
moral development, and criminal behaviour. Toronto: Lexington Books. p 281-355.

Levenson J. 2000. Beating the bullies? The Prison Service's Anti Bullying Strategy:
Monitoring prison regimes. London: Prison Reform Trust.

McAlister AL, Ama E, Barroro C, Peters RJ, Kelder S. 1999. Promoting tolerance and
moral engagement through peer counselling. Unpublished manuscript. University of
Texas Health Science Centre, Houston, Texas.

Menesini E, Sanchez V, Fonzi A, Ortega R, Costabile A, Lo-Feudo G. 2003. Moral
emotions and bullying: A cross-national comparison of differences between bullies,
victims and outsiders. Aggressive Behaviour 29(6):515-530.

O'Donnell I, Edgar K. 1998a. Bullying in Prisons (Occupational Paper No. 18). Oxford:
Centre for Criminological Research, University of Oxford, UK.

O'Donnell I, Edgar K. 1998b. Routine Victimisation in Prisons. The Howard Journal
37(3):266-279.

O'Mahony P. 1997. Mountjoy prisoners: A sociological and criminological profile. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Paterline BA, Petersen DM. 1999. Structural and Social Psychological Determinants of Prisonization. Journal of Criminal Justice 27(5):427-441.

Power KG, Dyson GP, Wozniak E. 1997. Bullying among Scottish young offenders: Inmates' self reported attitudes and behaviour. Journal of Community and Social Psychology 7:209-218.

Randall P. 1997. Adult Bullying: Perpetrators and victims. London, UK: Routledge.

Salmivalli C, Largerspetz K, Bjorkqvist K, Osterman K, Kauhiainen A. 1996. Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to the social status within the group. Aggressive Behaviour 22:1-15.

Thomas CW, Zingraff MT. 1974. Organizational structure and prisonization scale [OSPS]. In: Brodsky SL, Smitherman HO, editors. Handbook of scales for research in crime and delinquency. New York: Plenum. p 211-214.

Wing HC. 2003. Doing time: Prison experience and identity among first time inmates. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology 47(1):114-117.

Wooldredge JD. 1998. Inmate lifestyle and opportunities for victimisation. Journal of research in crime and delinquency 35(4):480-502.

Zingraff MT. 1980. Inmate assimilation: A comparison of male and female delinquents. Criminal Justice and Behaviour 7:275-292.

Table I. Overall Categorization of Bullying Behaviour

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Pure Bully (1)	9	6.8
Bully/Victim (2)	75	56.8
Pure Victim (3)	31	23.5
Not-Involved (4)	17	12.9

β = .32 **

(β = .18) *

Bullying

Social Status

β = .31 **

(β = .47)**

Moral Disengagement
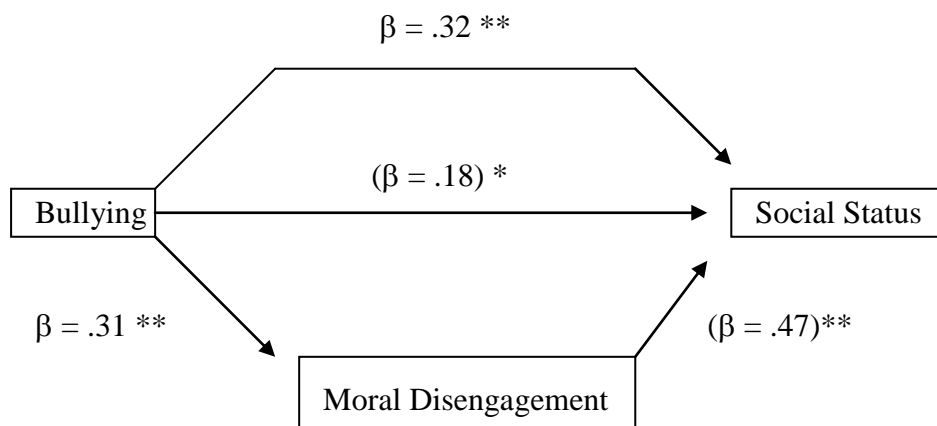
Note: *p < .05; **p < .01. Beta weights are shown; betas in parentheses are controlling for the other variable.

Figure 1. Mediation of the Bullying-Social Status relationship by Moral Disengagement.

List of Figure Legends

Figure 1. Mediation of the Bullying-Social Status relationship by Moral Disengagement.