

Making a connection between bullying and health problems

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Over the last decade, the subject of bullying has become a topic of academic interest, as scientists and social scientists delve into the psychological and physiological effects for both the bullied and the bully.

Clarkson University Assistant Professor of Psychology Jennifer Knack is one of these researchers. Her research into bullying focuses on the relationship between [social pain](#) and physical pain.

"My work seeks to understand why some people who are bullied get sick and others don't," she says. "Is it a personality factor? Or is it something in their bodies? If we can learn who is at risk of developing health problems and come up with ways of intervening, we can reduce risk of physical health problems."

Social pain brought on by rejection and victimization predicts hormonal changes that can lead to [health problems](#), such as [high blood pressure](#), abdominal pain, headaches and joint pain. For example, changes in cortisol, "the stress hormone," have been linked to being bullied.

Another physiological biomarker is blood glucose. Stress affects how the body utilizes blood sugar and is currently examining how experiencing multiple social stressors affects [blood glucose levels](#). By measuring the difference in [blood sugar levels](#) of people experiencing social stress and their ability to perform self-regulating tasks, Knack hopes to gain insight into why some people are more adversely affected by bullying than

others.

Her research has been published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, and *Brain and Cognition*, as well as in several books.

Provided by Clarkson University

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