

A World Apart: Bullying in a Middle School Culture

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Abstract: As adolescents have peer-to-peer contacts, the perceptions and lived experiences of healthy inter-personal relationships vary between adults, including parents and educators, and the youths themselves. Relational discrepancy inhibits the development of an appropriate understanding of the parameters of healthy interactions. Current research indicates that youths are susceptible to bullying; therefore, an effort is needed to support bullying prevention strategies as a means of combating inter-personal relationship violence and abuse. Additionally, effective communication is needed to illustrate acceptable behaviors. The issue of bullying will best be examined using an extended literature review and quantitative research. The research – which is a segment of a large, long-term research grant – uses student questionnaires to examine behavior within the students’ school culture. This research focused on eleven- to fourteen-year-olds in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at Hadley Middle School, a public school in the Midwestern metropolitan city of Wichita, Kansas. Throughout two academic years, students completed questionnaires that asked them to assess respectful behaviors in their school culture. This information will be used to develop tools needed for schools to implement policy changes that equip adolescents entering into inter-personal relationships with a clearer understanding of healthy behaviors.

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