DO EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS AND WAYS OF KNOWING PREDICT REACTIONS TO A CHILD WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME?

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This study explored the relationship between epistemological beliefs, ways of knowing, parenting styles, and how one reacts to a child with Asperger Syndrome acting out in public. The purpose was to determine if epistemological beliefs, ways of knowing, and/or parenting style predict how an individual would respond in such a situation. Epistemological beliefs, or beliefs about the nature and source of knowledge, looked at were certain knowledge and omniscient authority. Ways of knowing were classified as connected knowing (perspective taking) and separate knowing (devil’s advocate), and reflect the relationship between the knower and the object or subject of knowing. Parenting styles reflect the parents’ use of demanding behavioral compliance as a method to integrate the child into the family and society, and were categorized as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Two hundred and nine college students between the ages of 19 and 55 participated in the study. The participants completed questionnaires to determine their epistemological beliefs, connected or separate knowing, and parenting style, and demographic questions. They then responded to a scenario involving a child with Asperger Syndrome. People who gave appropriate advice had higher scores in connected knowing than people who gave inappropriate advice, suggesting that higher levels of connected knowing lead to more appropriate reactions to such situations. An ancillary analysis revealed that authoritative parenting, separate knowing, and certain knowledge are related to connected knowing. Future research is suggested to explore those relationships.