

Young outcasts suffer long-term problems

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Children who are ostracized by their classmates are more likely to withdraw from activities and score lower on standardized tests, U.S. researchers say.

Peer-group rejection also can lead to long-term psychological damage -- a problem that affects boys and girls equally, says Eric Buhs of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"We're talking about kids whose classmates don't let them sit with them in the cafeteria," Buhs told The Washington Post. "This is what happens when a whole group demonstrates, 'We don't want you around.'"

Kindergarten students viewed as aggressive are most likely to be outcasts as fourth graders, concludes the study of 380 Midwestern children aged 5-11.

Educator and author Rosalind Wiseman, whose book was the basis for the movie "Mean Girls," says parents should work calmly with schools and consider individual training in social skills and interest-based group activities outside of school.

The study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, was reported in the Journal of Educational Psychology.

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