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Life in college : an exploratory study examining undergraduate students' experiences with indirect aggression

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this project was to examine college students' perceptions about a destructive, covert form of bullying known as "*indirect aggression*." Indirect aggression is a type of social manipulation in which the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim. This study also collected information about the "reality TV" viewing habits of the sample during high school. The goal was threefold: to pilot a methodology for examining perceptions of indirect aggression in the college student population, to expand our understanding of this covert form of bullying in young adults, and to examine the relationship of reality TV exposure to indirect aggression outcomes. Methods. This study was an exploratory quantitative pilot study. The sample consisted of 78 undergraduate college students who attend a metropolitan co-ed college in the Northeast. Study participants completed a well validated survey to capture their self-reports of indirect aggression, both as an aggressor and as a target. In addition study participants completed five questions pertaining to their reality television viewing habits during high school. Findings. College students are experiencing indirect aggression on this college campus. Students who live on campus are engaging in more forms of indirect aggression than those living off campus. Students with higher reality TV exposure were more likely to engage in various forms of indirect aggression. Conclusion. College faculty and health educators should be educated about this form of bullying and encouraged to develop targeted outreach and health education strategies targeting these destructive behaviors.

Keywords: Bullying, indirect aggression, college students, reality television

LIFE IN COLLEGE:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY EXAMINING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'

EXPERIENCES WITH INDIRECT AGGRESSION

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

According to Professor Daniel Olweus, a pioneer in the research field of *bullying* (1993), a "person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself" (p. 9). Bullying is a pervasive social problem that is no longer seen as "just a phase" of development in kids; modern day extremes of bullying, such as cyberbullying, have caused some individuals to take their own lives to escape the turmoil of being bullied. The scope of bullying research has expanded in the last decade to include *covert and indirect forms*, the subject of this research.

The aim of this project is to examine college students' perceptions about a destructive, covert form of bullying known as "*indirect aggression*." Indirect aggression is a type of social manipulation in which the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992b). Indirect aggression can take many forms, including gossiping, rumor spreading, excluding individuals from a group or activity, or ignoring an individual (Archer & Coyne, 2005). The literature suggests that this covert form of aggression becomes the preferred form of bullying as students age, and is prominent by high school (Archer & Coyne, 2005). While indirect aggression has been examined in middle school, high school populations and even in the workplace, almost no research has been undertaken with college-age students. Indirect aggression often goes "underground" on campuses and can be difficult to identify. It is a

destructive form of bullying that may well extend into the undergraduate years and affect student adjustment and performance.

There is very little research about indirect aggression on college campuses which emphasizes the need for a study such as this to look in greater detail at the rates that college students are experiencing this covert form of bullying. Research that adds to our fund of knowledge about the experience of college students with bullying will help to inform direct practice with this population in terms of targeted outreach and health education strategies; will inform further research; and may be used to inform college faculty and health educators who are in direct contact with this population. In addition, research in this area will help to inform social workers of what young adults are potentially encountering in their social interactions in the college environment, allowing clinical interventions to be tailored to those needs. It will also help to continue to shed light on factors that are potentially affecting the social development of late stage adolescents and young adults.

In addition to indirect aggression, this study also examined students' reality television viewing habits during their senior year of high school and the association of these behaviors with self-reported bullying behavior in college. Research on reality television suggests that this genre normalizes aggressive behavior and often displays such behavior as a way to get ahead in life. Indirect aggression was found to exist in 92% of television programs aired in British airwaves that are popular among adolescents (Coyne & Archer, 2004). That is compared to 47% that contain physical forms of aggression (Gunter, Harrison, & Wykes, 2003). Indirect aggression has been portrayed as more justified and rewarded forms of behavior (Coyne et al., 2004).

This was an exploratory project, using quantitative methods. The goals was threefold: to pilot a methodology for examining perceptions of indirect aggression in the college student

population, to expand our understanding of this covert form of bullying in young adults, and to

examine the relationship of reality TV exposure to indirect aggression outcomes.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This literature review is organized into three sections. The initial section examines the concept of bullying as it has evolved in the research literature, followed by a more detailed discussion of a covert form of bullying known as indirect aggression. Finally, the role of reality television viewing among adolescents and young adults will be examined from the perspective of its potential impact on bullying behavior.

For the most part, "bullying" studies have been conducted on elementary and high school students, and among some professional groups (Forrest, Eatough, & Shevlin, 2005). There is sparse literature examining these phenomena among college students. The literature on "indirect aggression" indicates that this covert form of bullying manifests in childhood and continues through adolescence, young adulthood and even into adulthood (Forrest, et al., 2005). As people age, this behavior becomes more sophisticated and covert, making it difficult to observe and easier to use against another individual.

Research on the viewing habits of reality television among adolescents and young adults underscores the need for continued examination and understanding of the ways in which the perceived realism of this programming affects young viewers (Hall, 2006). Research on reality television genre suggests that these shows normalize aggressive behavior and often display such behavior as a way to get ahead in life.

Bullying: A General Overview

Beginning in the 1990s, Professor Daniel Olweus of Norway pioneered research on bullying (Olweus, 1993). His work provides a commonly accepted definition of bullying that is used as a template for most studies related to this form of aggression. According to Olweus (1993), a "person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself" (p. 9). Bullying can take many different forms, including direct or indirect, and can be verbal, physical, or nonverbal in nature (Olweus, 1993).

Bullying in the college student population: The literature review undertaken for this study found several articles published in college newspapers addressing the general topic of bullying on college and university campuses. Of particular interest was an article printed in *The Battalion* by at Texas A & M University in April 2011. A guest columnist documented a faculty assembly at the University which sought to address how to curb the "rapidly growing antagonist known as bullying" (White, 2011, p.1). Faculty and staff began to share experiences and seek advice about how to intervene in bullying situations they were witnessing on campus (White, 2011).

Several important issues were identified in this article: 1) bullying incidents are often getting mischaracterized as hazing, 2) there needs to be more research on bullying on college campuses, and 3) faculty and students need to be educated in the signs of bullying and ways to intervene. Bullying appears to be occurring across a broad range of venues on college campuses: clubs and organizations, sports, the Greek system, within the classroom, between students, and between faculty, staff and students (White, 2011). Another article published in October 2010 was found on the Penn State University news website. The article, written by Patty Kleban,

echoed many of the same issues noted by Texas A & M, that "bullying is alive and well on college campuses" (Kleban, 2010, p. 1).

Student to student bullying: Two quantitative studies were identified that look specifically at college students experiences with bullying. Chapell et al. (2004) explored bullying in college by both students and teachers. Both faculty and students reported having seen bullying on the campus, with over half of students reporting having witnessed infrequent to very frequent bullying between students, and roughly 25% reporting having been the target of bullying (ranging from occasionally to frequently).

A totally of 1,025 undergraduate students at a northeastern public university participated in this voluntary study. Two-thirds of participants were female. The average age was 21, and the sample was predominantly "European Americans (82%). The bullying questionnaire used in this study was based on the format suggested by Dan Olweus (Chapell et al., 2004). The study first presented the students with a standard definitions of the different forms that bullying might take. The questions were based closely on Olweus's widely accepted definition, but modified to encompass bullying by teachers (Chapell et al., 2004). The definition used in this study encompassed the concept of indirect aggression. Students were then asked to identify if they were being bullied in one of four categories being attacked verbally, physically, through the use of obscene gestures, or "intentionally isolating you or excluding you from a social group" (Chapell et al., 2004).

Faculty to student bullying: This study highlights college students on this campus were not only experiencing bullying by students but they were also experiencing bullying by their professors (Chapell et al., 2004). Incredibly, one half of the respondents indicated that they had

witnessed faculty bullying another student. Only 18% of students indicated that they were themselves bullies and most of those responding indicated that it was an infrequent behavior Chapell's excellent review article of this subject found that students reported a bullying rate by faculty of 1.7% in the previous five months, while nearly 5% of students in college study reported being bullied by a professor.

One of the significant limitations of this study is that it only looks at the frequency of bullying of occurrences but does not evaluate and identify the types of bullying that are dominating college campuses.

Bullying across time: Another study "investigated the continuity in being a bully, victim, or bully-victim from elementary school through college" (Chapell et al., 2006, p. 633). The study population was made up of 119 undergraduate students consisting of 62 females and 57 males at an eastern university; 79% were European Americans, and males and females were almost equally represented in the sample (Chapell et al., 2006). Like the previous study discussed in this review, Olweus' Bully/Victim Questionnaire format was used to collect data (Olweus, 1996). Students were asked to use a rating system to answer questions about their experiences with bullying in elementary school, high school, and college. Results revealed that individuals experienced more bullying elementary school than in high school and more in high school than in college. Verbal bullying was the most common form found on the college campus, the next most common was social bullying (Chapell, 2006). The most significant results of the study found a positive correlation between having been a bully in elementary school, high school and college. There was also a positive correlation between being bullied in college and high school, and a positive correlation between having bullied in high school and college (Chapell, 2006). In addition there was also a significant correlation between having been

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a bully and victim in high school and then repeating that role in college (Chapell, 2006). One of the evident limitations in this study was the retrospective nature of the data; relying on memories and past experiences when collecting the data. People over time can at times remember things differently than they occurred.

Bullying through Social Media

The use of the internet, social media, and cell phone technology have created another avenue of harassment termed *cyberbullying*. This form of bullying "involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others" (Belsey, 2012, p. 1). Examples include using text messages and social media such as Facebook or Twitter to spread rumors or harass an individual. There are some differences that are distinct to this form of social torment which add a new dimension to this covert form of aggression. Unlike traditional bullying where an individual could be free from bullying when they went home, now there is no escape from text messages, messages via Facebook, or email (Tokunaga, 2009). There is no longer a safe bully free zone. In addition another common characteristic of this form of bullying is the invisibility of those doing the bullying. Overall, the studies found that individuals who would not normally participate in traditional face to face bullying may engage in bullying online because of the added anonymity and invisibility (Tokunaga, 2009).

Indirect Aggression

Research on bullying has continued to expose more covert forms that are often utilized throughout an individual's lifetime. This study focuses on a covert form of bullying called indirect aggression. There has been some debate among developmental researchers as to what exactly constitutes this form of aggression; terms in the literature for this form of bullying

include "*indirect aggression*", "*relational aggression,*" and "*social aggression.*" The distinctions between the three forms of indirect aggression are often blurred and, regardless of the name, have been noted to be referring to the same phenomenon (Bjorkqvist, 2001). Relational aggression refers to harm that occurs through the manipulation or injury of a relationship (Young Boye, & Nelson, 2006). Social aggression is frequently defined as behaviors that are non-confrontational (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariepy, 1989), and use the social community as forum to attack an individual including behaviors (Xie, Swith, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002).

Similar to relational and social aggression, indirect aggression is a type of social manipulation in which the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992b). Indirect aggression can take many forms, including gossiping, rumor spreading, excluding individuals from a group or activity, ignoring an individual, or persuading others to dislike someone (Archer & Coyne, 2005). This form of aggression contains no physical harm as the main consequence is social exclusion or reputational manipulation of the other. The literature suggests that indirect aggression becomes the preferred form of bullying as students age, and is prominent by high school (Archer & Coyne, 2005).

Theoretical framework: Two theoretical frameworks have been advanced to explain the emergence of indirect aggression. One perspective, *the socio-cultural perspective*, links "indirect aggression to the differential socialization of men and women (Lagerspetz, et al., 1988) or to the cognitive and social development of the individual" (Kaukianinen, et al., 1999; Leenaars & Rinaldi, 2010, p. 132). *Evolutionary psychology* provides an alternative explanation; specifically, that indirect aggression evolved as a form of aggression because it has a reduced cost to the aggressor as compared to direct aggression (Leenaars & Rinaldi, 2010). Both of these

theoretical perspectives support the notion that indirect aggression as a form of bullying behavior becomes more covert and indirect as individuals age and physical aggression becomes less socially acceptable by peers.

Developmental progression: Developmentally, indirect aggression is most often utilized in young adults and continues throughout adulthood. Bjorkqvist and colleagues (1992b) describe a developmental model for understanding the forms of aggression that individuals use. Forrest and colleagues describe the following progression (2005). Children spend the early years of their lives utilizing forms of direct aggression such as hitting, kicking, and slapping. As physical aggression becomes less socially acceptable, it declines and is replaced by direct verbal aggression such as shouting, arguing, and swearing. The increase in verbal aggression directly coincides with an increase in greater verbal ability skill. As children and adolescence continue to socially mature they begin to develop and utilize less observable forms of indirect aggression behavior. This is typically seen between the ages of 8 and 11 years of age.

Kaukiainen and colleagues (1999) have linked the development and refinement of this covert form of aggression to the increase in sophistication of verbal skills. Studies suggest that, by young adulthood, both males and females utilize similar levels of indirect aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005).

College student populations: Until the late 1980's most research on bullying and aggression focused on the more overt forms of bullying such as physical and direct aggression, and paid little or no attention to the subtle forms of hurtful behavior often referred to as indirect aggression. Indirect aggression has been found to be one of the most underreported forms of bullying in schools (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). There are numerous studies that examine the occurrence and frequency of covert forms of bullying in elementary, middle, and high school

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aged students (Chapell, et al., 2006; Kim, Catalano, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2011; Peeters, Cillessen, & Scholte, 2009). And, there are studies of the work place (Cleary, Hunt & Horsfall, 2010; Thobaben, 2011).

Measurement of indirect aggression: Dr. Sarah Hodgkinson, PhD (formerly S. Forrest) is among the first researchers to develop a psychometric measure of indirect aggression to be used in studies of adult populations (Forrest, et al., 2005). The measurement tool she developed to examine indirect aggression has been used in several different studies looking at covert forms of bullying the college population. Students are asked about their experience both as an aggressor or bully through the Indirect Aggression Scale Aggressor version (IAS-A), and through the Indirect Aggression Scale Target version (IAS-T) as a recipient or target of aggression. Three domains are examined from each perspective: social exclusion, malicious humor, and guilt induction (Forrest, et al., 2005).

The scale was normed in a study of 588 undergraduate and post-graduate students (177 males and 385 females) from a university in England (Forrest, et al., 2005). As reported by Forrest (2005), results indicate that all of the subscales, with the exception of IAS-T guilt induction, were negatively correlated with age. Gender differences were found in the forms of indirect aggression that were used specifically that men use more malicious humor than women. However, men and women were equal victims and instigators of indirect aggression with peers..

Hodgkinson's study has helped to further our understanding of what constitutes indirect aggression in adult populations and how comparable it is to childhood and adolescent forms of this aggression. Social exclusionary behaviors were shown to be very similar to those used in childhood and adolescence but more sophisticated and cover in nature (Forrest, et al., 2005). This study has provided the IAS-A and IAS-T measures which were used in this research study.

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Indirect aggression and victimization: Lindsey Leenaars and David Lester (2011) conducted a study exploring indirect aggression and victimization in a college setting. The aim was to "determine whether sex difference in indirect aggression and victimization in emerging adulthood followed the developmental trend of childhood and adolescence and to investigate the psychological underpinnings of indirect aggression and victimization in emerging adulthood" (p.65- 66). That is, to determine the relationship between indirect aggression, *silencing the self* (Jack, 1991), and *anger discomfort* (Sharkin & Gelso, 1991). According to Leenaars and Lester (2011), "silencing the self involves the suppression of one's own desires including the sacrificing of one's self for the desire of others" (p. 66). "Anger discomfort similarly involves a repression/suppression of one's feelings and thoughts, namely one's own anger" (Leenaars & Lester, 2011, p. 66). The researchers hypothesized that indirect aggression would be positively correlated to an increase in silencing the self, increased discomfort with anger, and higher levels of depression (Leenaars & Lester, 2011).

The first part of the research study consisted of 106 undergraduate respondents who were enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at a state college. The sample consisted of 33 men and 73 women with a mean age of 20.6 (Leenaars & Lester, 2011). Five domains were investigated in this study. The Buss and Durkee Hostility Inventory (BDHI 1957) was used to examine hostility, including subscales looking at assault, irritability, resentment, suspicion, guilt, indirect, negativism, and verbal. The Silencing Self Scale (Jack, 1991) was used to examine the tendency to suppress one's own desires and fulfill the desire of others. The Anger Discomfort Scale (Sharkin & Gelso, 1991) was used to measure discomfort with one's anger. The Manic-Depressive Scale (Thalbourne, Delin, & Bassett, 1994) was used to examine the presence of mania and depression, and either the IAS-A or IAS-T were administered, but not both.

The study found that men and women did not differ in age or scores across any of the scales. This finding is consistent with those in other studies on indirect aggression, (Leenaars & Lester, 2011). In addition, this study found that in indirect aggression as an aggressor (IAS-A) was "significantly associated with scores for anger discomfort, silencing the self, mania, depression, and on the BDHI measures of guilt, resentment, indirect aggression, irritability, and suspicion" (Leenaars & Lester, 2011, p. 69). Being the target of indirect aggression (IAS-T) was "associated with scores for anger discomfort, silencing the self, mania, depression, and on the BDHI measures of negativism, resentment, assaultiveness, irritability, and suspicion" (Leenaars & Lester, 2011, p. 69). The correlates of indirect aggression were found to be similar for both aggressors and targets.

The second part of this research study was conducted on 113 undergraduate students, 76 women and 37 men also enrolled in psychology courses at a state college (Leenaars & Lester, 2011). Study participants were administered both the IAS-A and IAS-T scales (Forrest, et al., 2005) separated by the Anger Discomfort Scale (Sharkin & Gelso, 1991) and the Silencing Self Scale (Jack, 1991). Results indicated that there were strong associations between being an aggressor and being a victim of indirect aggression (Leenaars & Lester, 2011). IAS-A scores were found to be associated with both Silencing the Self Scores and Anger Discomfort Scores. In this study age was not associated with IAS-A and IAS-T scores but males were found to score higher in IAS-A scores, and questionnaires that were given in the order aggressor/target resulted in lower IAS-T scores. For women it was found that Anger Discomfort scores were significantly correlated to IAS-A scores and Silencing the Self was significantly associated to both IAS-A and IAS-T scores. This study was one of the most comprehensive found; it highlights the need for further research on indirect aggression in the college population to look at variances other than

gender differences. Results from these studies found that students who engage more in indirect aggression towards others also experience more indirect aggression towards themselves. In addition it was found that there were no significant sex differences in indirect aggression or victimization (Leenaars & Lester, 2011). One significant limitation of this study was the small sample size that consisted of a majority of woman, limiting the ability to generalize the results outside of post graduate students.

Lindsey Leenaars along with Christina M. Rinaldi (2010) conducted an additional study focusing on college students experiences with indirect aggression. This study examines "the role of sex, gender role orientation, social representations of indirect aggression, and indicators of psychosocial adjustment in indirect aggression and victimization in an emerging adult sample" (Leenaars & Rinaldi, 2010, p. 131). The sample consisted of 42 undergraduate students (19 men and 23 women) with a mean age of 20.43. Several different scales were used to conduct this study including a revised self report version of the indirect subscale of the Direct and Indirect Aggression Scale (DIAS: Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Osterman, 1992). Participants completed both the aggressor and target version of this scale (Leenaars & Rinaldi, 2010). Study participants also completed a self-report scale measuring expressions of aggression, a self-report scale called the BSRI (Bem, 1974). The Behavior Assessment System for Children, second edition, Self Report College (BASC-2-SRP-Col; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) scales included internalizing problems such as substance abuse, sensation seeking and social stress; inattention/hyperactivity problems; personal adjustment; and content scales such as anger control, mania, and ego strength. In addition, a random subset of 18 study participants completed a daily journal for three consecutive days recording their positive and negative social interactions (Leenaars & Rinaldi, 2010).

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The studies preliminary objective was to determine the number of indirect aggressors, targets, and aggressor/targets within the study population. Results found that 33% of study participants could be classified as indirect aggressors, 44% could be classified as indirect targets, and 22 % could be classified as both aggressors and targets. Findings from this study showed no significant differences on total indirect aggression and victimization scores or on social representations of indirect aggression. Several psychosocial adjustment factors were significantly related to indirect aggression. Sensation seeking, mania, and hyperactivity were found to be positively related to indirect aggression.

Qualitative data that was collected through the journals showed that college students are experiencing similar forms of indirect aggression as adolescents. Two main themes were uncovered in the journals. The first theme involved both rational and emotional reactions to incidence of indirect aggression. These included sadness, anger, and minimization and justification. The second main theme that emerged was the students' actions taken after the incident. Within this theme five subthemes emerged which included doing nothing, seeking revenge, talking it out, leaving it to karma, and turning the experience into something positive. The journals revealed that confronting or ignoring the aggressor and leaving things to karma did not work. A disturbing trend from the journals was that individuals typically do not see gossiping as harmful but more as an entertaining way to pass the time (Leenaars & Rinaldi, 2010). Much like Leenaars' other study on indirect aggression (2011) this research study presents a limitation in the small sample sized used which limits the degree to which the results can be applied to the general public.

Reality Television

In the context of the proposed study, reality based television is broadly defined as programming that captures "ordinary people in unscripted, producer contrived situations as they live out events" (Rankin, 2004, p. 1). This type of programming is characterized by people (not actors) portraying themselves as they are filmed, at least, in part, in their living or working environment rather than on a set, without a script, with events placed in a narrative context, and for the primary purpose of viewer entertainment (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). Reality television has been around since the first program aired in 1973 titled *"An American Family."* This 12 hour documentary series aired on PBS and filmed the Loud family in their home environment as they lived their everyday lives chronicled. *"An American Family"* not only introduced a genre a television that portrayed real people and their everyday lives but also changed the dynamics and complexity of future family sitcoms such as *One Day at a Time* and *Roseanne* (http://www.pbs.org/lanceloud/american/). It was not until 1992 when this genre of television resurfaced on the young adult popular network, MTV in the form of *The Real World* which is now entering its 20th season.

This genre has expanded and diversified to include competition programs such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, dating programs such as *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*, makeover and lifestyle programs such as *The Biggest Loser*, talent search programs such as *American Idol* and *The X Factor*, and "docusoaps" staring celebrities such as *Keeping up with the Kardashians*. A study by Nielsen Ratings shows that the average American in 2010 was watching roughly 34 hours of television per week (Stelter, 2011). While this genre draws viewers from many demographic groups, it is disproportionately popular among adolescents (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). The fact that reality programs consistently place at, or near, the

top of the Nielsen ratings illustrates the considerable allure the unscripted, perceived realism and seemingly spontaneous emotional moments, exploits, and tribulations of "real" people hold considerable for millions of viewers (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). Many but not all of the reality television shows are glorifying different forms and variations of indirect and relational aggression as a way to come out of the winner and above the rest of the pack. The following studies take a look at various aspects of reality television and the affect that this media genre is having on people's attitudes towards various forms of aggression.

Perceived realism: A discussion paper funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation examines both positive and negative influences that reality television is having on public health issues (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). The article presents the viewpoint that reality television has the potential to both negatively glorify such things as casual sex, beauty, and alcohol abuse. It can also be an effective vehicle for promoting behaviors that inspire healthy lifestyle changes such as losing weight and quitting smoking (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). This is the only literature found that highlights some of the positive aspects of reality television programming including giving normal everyday people a medium to share their story, which frequently is based on a broad range of human experiences often not found in other television formats. This also imparts a sense of personal validation (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). In addition, the authors offer a qualitative analysis using direct observation techniques of programs geared towards health such as weight loss and cosmetic surgery.

Christenson and Ivancin (2006) conclude that reality television provides an avenue of strong audience identification that can have both positive and negative influences in individual lives depending on the core message of the show. For instance, in terms of sexual content on such shows as *"The Bachelor"* and *"The Bachelorette"* there is concern that even though the

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participants are adults, the target audience is often much younger and at an age where they will be influenced by the content (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). Christenson and Ivancin (2006) also stress that the target audience of adolescents tend to identify with reality television characters because of the perceived realism and that the messages communicated by this media have a potential to shape sexual attitudes. Adolescents are in the process of trying to navigate the world and their place in it and media plays a large role in that and therefore there needs to be more research on this area as little currently exists (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006).

A qualitative study published by *Communication Quarterly* involved a series of focus group interviews of young adults utilizing an open-ended data gathering method that evaluated their perceptions of reality television programs (Hall, 2006). The study found that factors affecting realism were based upon the perception of cast members' behavior as a reflection of their own will and personality and that their actions determined the outcomes of the show. Individuals become wrapped up in the realism factor through two criteria: "typicality, which is the perception that the media is portraying an event or people which are representative of a particular population, and factuality, which is the perception that media portrays a real world event or person" (Hall, 2006, p. 209).

Hall's study highlights a connection between the perceived realism of particular shows and the lack of predictability which in turn seems to contribute to two additional elements that make this genre of television appealing: suspense and opportunities for cognitive involvement. One of the factors that should be taken into account and could be perceived as a limitation in this study is the social context in which the interviews were conducted. In an open-ended question focus group, an individual's answers can be shaped by their peers' influence (Hall, 2006). That the majority of the participants were white is a common factor throughout all of the studies

examined in this literature review. In addition this is the second study conducted at a

Midwestern university which limits factors such as geographic location and potentially guiding

cultural factors especially if these individuals are from this area or have been residing there for a

period of time.

One of the common themes throughout many of these studies, as highlighted by Hall's

(2006) focus group, is the need to evaluate the perceived realism of the shows being studied and

the power of the connectedness that teenagers feel to what they are seeing. A study published by

the *Journal for Advertising Research* looked at effective ways to create connectedness with

adolescent audiences by targeting themes of popularity, an unfortunate but effective technique

(Pantino et al., 2011). The authors noted that shows are likely to become the topic of

conversation on social networking sites such as Facebook which suggests that teenagers who

wish to be popular among their peers may feel more motivated to watch those shows with

regularity. Peer approval and pressure to conform to group expectations including what

television shows are being viewed by the majority is high on the priority list for many teenagers.

Pantino and colleagues (2011) describe a quantitative study of 1,098 U.S. teens and

preteens designed to examine which psycho-demographic groups are more apt to have high

connectedness to reality television programs. They found that young people who strove for

popularity and physical attractiveness were more likely to feel connected to these programs.

Popularity as a driver of reality program connectedness was found to be especially pronounced in

adolescence (Pantino et al., 2011). This study presents an understanding of the ways to engage

adolescents and capture their interest in this genre of programming, but, unfortunately due to the

nature of the study and audience for which it is being written, it does not highlight the facets of

the programs or the personality traits that keep adolescents from becoming engaged with reality television.

Two additional articles were reviewed that investigate the concept of the perceived realism of reality television. A study published by the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* collected two sets of data, one from 170 undergraduates (84% were female and 16% male) and the other from a sample of 131 city residents (60% female and 40% male) awaiting jury duty (Nabi, 2007). There was a larger amount of diversity in the city study with 50% being Caucasian and 50% were people of color; only 21% of the undergraduate population were people of color. Nabi's (2007) study utilized a multidimensional scaling which identified the underlying dimensions of romance and competitiveness as ways in which people think about reality television shows. In addition Nabi (2007) highlights that if one accepts these underlying themes the psychological effects of consuming such programming can be further examined.

One of the things that Nabi points out is that in relation to a media theory called *Cultivation Theory* which is a social theory that examines the long term effects of television watching on audiences (Nabi, 2007). Cultivation theory, a social theory, was developed by George Gerbner in the 1960's (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010, p. 337). His theory operates on the premise that an individual's social reality is influenced and shaped by what they view on television (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Looking at reality dating shows from this theoretical lens shows that themes of romance in these programs might be associated with the development or reinforcement of more unrealistic beliefs about dating relationship. She also says that pairing these themes with perceived realism of "real" people being seen on these shows further intensifies the effects of reality television (Nabi, 2007).

Robin Nabi was also involved in another study which looked at the psychological appeal of reality television (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). This early study utilized much of the same method as the later study detailed above including looking at two different samples. Both samples were drawn from Arizona residents who were awaiting jury duty (Nabi et al., 2003). Within both samples, there were an equal number of females and males, and roughly 80% were white and 20% were people of color. The results of the study show that individuals found the programs in reality television to be only moderately real. One of the key findings of this study was that traits in particular spontaneous personalities were "associated with viewership of particular programs and that impulsivity was associated with a greater range of viewing-based gratification" (Nabi et al., 2003, p. 326). One of the limits is the large base of reality television genres that are used in the study making it more difficult to link certain personality traits with specific program viewing.

Aggression in Reality Television: There have been numerous studies documenting that viewing violence in media can have long term and immediate harmful effects on a person's aggressive actions (Coyne, Archer, & Eslea, 2004). One of the primary conceptual frameworks that is applied to understanding the effects of viewing violence in the media is *Information Processing Theory* (Huesmann, 1986). Coyne et al. (2004) cites:

> According to this theory, each individual has a number of scripts that are accessible in memory that cover a variety of topics from proper tennis etiquette to acceptable aggressive and violent behavior. These topics are learned from observing models and then encoded and stored in memory to be used as a guide for future behavior. (p. 235)

Scripts that are more salient and that viewers feel more connected too are more likely to be encoded. Individuals store thousands of scripts but many are not properly maintained in memory. In order for a script to be maintained in memory an individual must recall the situation and fantasize about it. The more elaborate the fantasizing and the more often it is recalled the more likely it is to remain accessible in memory. These scripts are then used as guides for future situations and problem solving. Coyne et al (2004) cites, "Because television portrays a large amount of violence in a positive light, it is often as justified, rewarded, and perpetrated by an attractive hero (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001), a viewer may reinforce existing pathways or even form new scripts about acceptable aggressive behavior after watching violent media" (p. 235). After an individual has watched violent media scripts that involve aggression and violence are more likely to be activated. In addition these stored scripts are influenced by the individual's normative beliefs about aggression therefore an individual who tends to reject aggressive behavior will be less likely to act on it (Coyne et al., 2004).

A study by Coyne, Robinson, and Nelson (2010) concluded that "aggression portrayed realistically is more likely to be imitated than non-realistic aggression" (p. 282). This study, conducted in the United Kingdom, evaluated three types of aggression (physical, verbal, and relational) on both reality television programs and non-reality programs. Relational aggression is behavior that involves "direct harm to relationships or the social environment and includes gossiping, spreading rumors, social exclusion, and relational manipulation" (Coyne et al., 2010, p. 284). Ten television programs were utilized for this study, 5 were classified as reality television and five non-reality. The content analysis conducted encompassed 120 hours of television split equally between the two types of programs. Each of aggressive acts was coded based on the three noted and the type of act was also documented such as hitting or gossiping

(Coyne et al., 2010). For each of the three types of acts, coding was included to signify whether the act was justified, rewarded, occurred naturally or artificially, and what type of was reward was received by the aggressor. Based on the 120 hours of television programs that were analyzed and equally split between the two types: a total of "5,099 distinct acts of physical, verbal, or relational aggression, at an average rate of 42.50 acts per hour" (Coyne et al., 2010, p. 289). Reality television accounted for 61.5 % of the acts while non-reality television accounted for only 38.5 of total aggression (Coyne et al., 2010).

Verbal and relational acts of aggression were the most highly televised with relational being more frequently portrayed in reality programming, aggressive acts were virtually non-existent (Coyne et al., 2010). Another interesting find highlighted by this study is that females were more likely to engage in relational aggression than males. This included behaviors such as name calling, gossiping, and giving dirty looks. This study emphasizes that this particularly significant finding is "communicating the message to viewer's that this type of female behavior is normal and an acceptable way to achieve one's goals" (Coyne et al., 2010, p. 293). Relational aggression was frequently used by contestant in reality shows to get ahead and pin contestants against one another (Coyne et al., 2010). Despite this alarming finding there has been little written and studied on the topic of this television genre and aggression. This study strongly points towards the need for further research in the area of bullying and the message it is sending to the viewers.

The Girl Scouts released a study on girls and reality television in October 2011 titled "Real to Me: Girls and Reality TV" (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2011, p. 1). The results validate the need for continued research on the effect of reality television. A survey was conducted using a national sample of 1,141 adolescent females' ages 11-17 years (Girl Scout

Research Institute, 2011). The survey indicated that the most popular reality programs were competition based shows such as Survivor and American Idol and shows that were based on real life such as The Jersey Shore (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2011). Forty seven percent indicated that they were regular watchers of reality television though it is unclear the parameters that defined regular watchers. The study found the regular viewers of this genre of television "accept and expect a higher level of drama, aggression, and bullying in their own lives" (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2011, p. 1). In addition the study highlighted that 73% of viewers indicated that these shows "make people think that fighting is a normal part of a romantic relationship" and 70% of regular viewers felt that the shows "make people think ok to treat others badly" (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2011, p. 1). The results were concerning and support previous findings that reality TV contributes to normalizing antisocial behaviors.

Indirect aggression in Reality Television: Violence is not the only form of aggression depicted in the media so are covert forms of indirect aggression including such things as rumors, manipulating others, and social exclusion. Indirect aggression was found to exist in 92% of television programs aired in British airwaves that are popular among adolescents (Coyne & Archer, 2004). That is compared to 47% that contain physical forms of aggression (Gunter, Harrison, & Wykes, 2003). Indirect aggression has been portrayed as more justified and rewarded forms of behavior (Coyne et al., 2004).

There are a limited number of studies conducted on the influence that indirect aggression portrayed in the media is having on human's aggressive behavior. Most of the studies were completed by SM Coyne and colleagues. The studies assessed whether or not television portrayals of indirect aggression affect a child's use of this form of bullying (Coyne et al., 2004). Participants for the study were 199 students between the ages of 11 and 14 years who attended a

school in England (Coyne et al., 2004). Study participants were show one of three videos that centered on either indirect and direct aggression and no aggression. All of the videos portrayed aggression as being rewarded and justified much like it is on television. Each of the participants was asked to rate each of the three videos based on excitement level using a likert scale. The excitement level of a program has been shown to have an influence on the effects of media violence. The videos were considered moderately exciting by participants (Coyne et al., 2004).

Students were asked to complete peer nominations using an adaptation Crick and Grotpeter's peer nomination scales (1995) and Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Osterman's peer estimation scales (1992a) which were used to determine peers that were considered directly or indirectly aggressive (Coyne et al., 2004). Each student was given a series of class lists and asked to circle up to five peers who acted in specific aggressive ways when they were angry. The study procedure started with students being asked by a confederate of the primary researcher to complete a puzzle. The confederate was blind to the study and was asked to behave arrogantly and in a superior manner, rushing the students in their puzzle completion. The confederate than left and the primary researcher instructed students on the next activity while brushing aside any comments that were made about the confederate. They were asked at this time to complete an evaluation on the confederate which the students were told would be used to determine if he was to get a raise in his current job at a university (Coyne et al., 2004).

Utilizing this paradigm allowed students to indirectly aggress against the confederate. Finally students were given a series of four hypothetical aggressive vignettes (two contained indirect aggression and two contained direct aggression) and were told that they were potential future story lines that television studios were considering. Study participants were asked to read

each vignette and then write down what they thought the aggressor would do if the story was actually happening to them (Coyne et al., 2004).

Coyne and colleagues (2004) study found that "viewing either direct or indirect aggression produced higher levels of subsequently indirectly aggressive responses, compared with the effect of viewing no-aggression" (p. 248). Participants who viewed direct aggression were more likely to use various forms of indirect aggression versus those who saw no-aggression. In addition this study provides some of the first evidence that the viewing of indirect aggression in media can have an immediate effect on subsequent indirect aggression. Coyne has since gone on to continue to study the effect that viewing violence in the media can have on an individual's use of indirect aggression. Her studies all show that viewing indirect aggression on television predicts can cause individuals particularly adolescents to use indirect aggression in real life.

Summary

The studies reviewed here support the observation that bullying is alive and well on college campuses. The review also clearly indicates the value of gaining a better understanding of the covert forms of bullying that exist today on college campuses and illustrate the importance of continued research beyond the high school aged student. The literature review on reality TV content also addresses the need for examining of this genre of media through a clinical lens. There was a large gap in our understanding about the effect that reality television is having on young adult views on bullying.

The next section will present the research questions to be examined and the methodology used to conduct this exploratory research study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study examined college students' perceptions and experiences with a covert form of bullying called indirect aggression. The sample consisted of 78 undergraduate students who agreed to participate after reviewing the informed consent (Appendix A). A total of 118 students started the survey, 78 met the inclusion criteria and completed the survey, 11 students were disqualified from the survey as they did not meet the inclusion criteria and 29 students abandoned the survey.

Two research questions were examined in this study: 1) are college students experiencing and engaging in indirect aggression? 2) Does exposure to reality television increase young adults use and acceptance of indirect aggression? As illustrated in the literature, there are a limited number of studies looking at indirect aggression in college aged young adults. Based on the findings in the literature review and ethical considerations, this study used exploratory quantitative methods to survey volunteering undergraduate students from a metropolitan co-ed college in the northeast using an online web-based anonymous survey tool called SurveyMonkey. The rational for this choice is that quantitative methods provide more precise, confidential, and generalized findings in an area where little prior work has been undertaken (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

Recruitment

The quantitative study employs an exploratory design with non-probability convenience sampling. A snowball technique was employed to recruit students. Prior to recruiting, this researcher consulted with various staff and professors at the college, including therapists in the counseling center, the head of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the college, and psychology and human service professors about the best recruitment methods to use with this population. In addition, before beginning the recruitment process, a Human Subject Review Expedited Application was submitted to the college's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. Approval for the research study was granted on February 12, 2012 (Appendix B).

The following steps were taken to implement and conduct the study. Due to college policies, students could not be emailed directly by this researcher. Therefore, recruitment was done by asking college staff and undergraduate professors during the spring 2012 semester to help with recruitment. In addition, a general recruitment posting was made on the college-wide website which is accessed by students for news on current activities and events on campus (Appendix C). An official list of the classes offered in the spring 2012 semester was used to gather the names of professors and then each individual professor were emailed asking for their help in the completion of this research study. In addition, two staff members who have direct access to groups of undergraduate students were also invited to participate in the recruitment process: the Director of Residential Life and the Director of the Peer Health Educators program.

The email sent to professors and staff introduced the researcher along with the purpose and aim of the research study (Appendix D). The email emphasized that the research study had been approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee at the college that participation in the

recruitment process was completely voluntary, described the format of the study and the time it would take students to complete if they chose to participate. Professors and staff who agreed to participate were sent a thank you email (Appendix E), along with instructions about the two emails to follow: the student recruitment email (Appendix F) and the text to be posted on their class Moodle page (Appendix G).

Faculty and Staff: A total of 177 undergraduate professors and two staff members were contacted and invited to participate in the recruitment process. Of those, 56 undergraduate professors and one staff member responded indicating they would like to participate by forwarding the recruitment email to their students. There were two additional undergraduate professors responded after the study closed and could not be included. Eight undergraduate professors declined to participate. The reasons for not participating included not teaching during the spring semester (n=1), having already asked their students to participate in other surveys (n=1), not wanting to increase their students' work load (n=2), and four respondents did not indicate why they chose not to participate. No responses were received from 113 of the undergraduate professors and one staff member. In summary, 31.6% of faculty who were contacted agreed to facilitate the study.

Sample: In order to be eligible for participation students were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: 1) must be 18 years of age or older; 2) currently enrolled as an undergraduate student at the college where the study was conducted; 3) have attended at least one semester of college either at the current institution or another. If a participant answered no to any of the three questions they were automatically redirected to a disqualification page where they were informed they did not meet the study requirements to participate and were thanked for

their time. In addition participants were asked if they had already completed this survey, if they answered yes they were automatically redirected to a disqualification page.

Students who met all of the inclusion criteria were taken to the informed consent page. Ensuring that individuals were fully informed about the study, and their participation in it, was a critical component. The informed consent contained information about study participation including the purpose of the research study, potential risk and benefits in participation, researcher contact information and information for support services through the college Counseling Center should any student participant decide they wanted to access these services after completing the survey. In addition the letter of consent informed students that their participation in the study was completely voluntary, their responses were confidential and no identifying information was collected to ensure participants anonymity.

Once participants read the informed consent they were required to respond to the electronic informed consent statement before being able to proceed with the survey. Respondents who indicated "I AGREE" with the informed consent statement were allowed to begin the survey. Those who indicated "I DO NOT AGREE" were automatically routed to an end screen and, thus, prevented from accessing the survey. The sample consisted of 78 undergraduate students who agreed to participate after reviewing the informed consent. A total of 118 students started the survey, 78 met the inclusion criteria and completed the survey, 11 students were disqualified from the survey as they did not meet the inclusion criteria and 29 students abandoned the survey.

Data Collection, Storage, and Protection

SurveyMonkey was used to collect this web-based anonymous survey. SurveyMonkey is hosted in a secure data center environment that uses a firewall, intrusion detection systems, and

other advanced technology to prevent interference or access from outside intruders. The data center is a highly protected environment with several levels of physical access security and 24-hour surveillance. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption was enabled in the survey; this technology protects respondent information using both server authentication and data encryption, ensuring that user data is safe, secure, and available only to authorized persons as it moves along communication pathways between the respondent's computer and SurveyMonkey servers (SurveyMonkey, 2012). SurveyMonkey was chosen for these protection factors in combination with its ease of use and navigation.

The link to the survey was listed in the recruitment email sent to students, and on Professors' class Moodle pages. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and required the use of an electronic interface device such as a computer, tablet, or smart phone to participate. To access the survey, students clicked on the link and were taken directly to the survey. In general the survey took participants less than 20 minutes to complete. There were many points where students could opt out once they reached the study page. Participants could choose not to open the survey at all from the link in the recruitment email, once having opened the survey, they could choose not to participate by so indicating this choice at the end of the Informed Consent. Once opening the survey questions, they could skip any question they wished, and; finally, they could choose not to submit the finished survey.

Once participants chose to submit the completed survey, their responses could not be removed from the data set because it would be impossible to identify their individual responses. These protocols were explained to the participants in the letter of consent. The survey's settings were configured such that participants access to the survey and their answers were gathered without tracking names, e-mails or IP addresses. In this way, the participants' identities and

survey answers remained anonymous, including to the researcher. Once the data was downloaded from SurveyMonkey, the study was taken off line. Downloaded data was stored on an encrypted, password-protected laptop computer. Access codes for the laptop, and research files contained therein, are known only to the researcher. The laptop has antivirus, antispyware software meeting government standards for protection of electronic data. All data, including any relevant paper documentation, will be kept secure for three years as required by Federal regulations. After that time, the data will be destroyed unless needed for continuing research. If kept, the electronic data will be secured as described above for as long as it is needed for research purposes.

Demographics

Demographic questions were asked to gain a greater perspective and understanding of the sample populations. Demographic questions included: class year, age, gender, race, place of residence, and academic major (Appendix H). The class distribution of participants ranged from freshman to senior with heavier participation with upperclassmen. The ages of study participants ranged from 18 to 30 years of age with the mean being 20.74 and the median age 21 years. The college where this study was conducted is roughly 70% women and 30% men and was reflected in the study sample. In addition the majority of the student population identifies as Caucasian which is reflected in the narrow distribution of race in the study sample. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they lived on campus. Students were asked to indicate their major. Sixteen different majors were identified and condensed into three different groupings:

Measures

The area of indirect aggression is besieged by various measurement issues; mainly because it is difficult to observe covert behaviors and reliance on self-reports of behavior have

their own set of difficulties. A majority of studies conducted on indirect aggression use peer nomination techniques to study the phenomena (Dijkstra, Lindenberg, Veenstra, 2008; Wei & Jonson-Reid, 2011). Peer nomination techniques, while appropriate for school aged children, have not been found to be practical or appropriate in adult populations (Forrest, et al., 2005). Older populations, including young adults, lack comparable peer groups to those of school aged children. Dr. Sarah Hodgkinson, PhD (formerly S. Forrest) developed a psychometric measure of indirect aggression to be used in an adult population. This well validated tool was developed specifically for use with adult populations to determine their ability to recognize and identify indirect aggression as a form of bullying (Forrest, et al., 2005). Data are collected from two self-report perspectives: that of being the aggressor and being the target of indirect aggression.

The Indirect Aggression Scale-Aggressor version (IAS-A: Forrest, et al., 2005) measures the usage of indirect aggression towards someone else. The Target Version (IAS-T) measures the experience of being a victim of indirect aggression. The tool consists of two scales, each with 25 self-report Likert-type items designed to capture students' experiences with indirect aggression during the last six months (Appendix I). The likert scale ranged from 1 to 5, 1 (being *never)* to 5 *(*being *regularly).* The IAS-A (the aggressor version) measures three domains of interest: social exclusion, malicious humor, and guilt induction (Forrest, et al., 2005). The IAS-T (the target version) examines the same three domains, but from the perspective of having been the recipient or "target" of social exclusion, malicious humor, and/or guilt induction (Forrest, et al., 2005).

Both the IAS-A and IAS-T have high levels of internal consistency. The Cronbach's coefficients for all subscales has coefficients about 0.80 (Forrest, et al., 2005), a coefficient above 0.70 is generally considered indicative of a reliable measure (Cortina, 1993). Permission

to use the IAS-A and IAS-T scales was granted by Dr. Sarah Hodgkinson, PhD via email correspondence (S. Hodgkinson PhD, personal communication, 3/20/2012).

A secondary interest of the study was to explore the relationship of TV viewing habits to indirect aggression behaviors. Study participants were asked four questions about their TV viewing habits during their senior year of high school: 1) how many hours per week they watched television when they were a senior high school, 2) how many hours per week they watch reality television shows. In addition, participant were asked to list and rank order the three reality television shows they looked forward to the most each week and to list the three reality television shows that they felt were "stupid." (Appendix J)

Data Analysis

The survey was opened on March 6, 2012 and closed on April 3, 2012. Responses were downloaded from SurveyMonkey on April 3, 2012. Data analysis was performed by the researcher, with consultation from her research advisor and other Smith College School for Social Work research faculty, all of whom signed a confidentiality agreement required of by Smith College for all research faculty. The data were initially inspected using univariate and descriptive statistics to examine the characteristics of the sample. Individual questions were analyzed for their frequency and distribution. Bivariate analyses were used to compare relationships between independent and dependent variables.

The next chapter presents the findings of this quantitative exploratory study which aims to examine college students' experiences with and perceptions of indirect aggression. In addition it also examines student's television and reality television viewing habits during their senior year of high school.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This was an exploratory study using a quantitative methods design. The purpose of this research was twofold: 1) to develop and pilot a methodology for looking at undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences with indirect aggression, a covert form of bullying, and 2) to investigate if there was an association between students' reality television viewing habits during their senior year of high school and self-reports of indirect bullying behavior in college. The goal of this research is to add to our knowledge of college students' experiences of indirect aggression and to examine if there is a correlation to their reality television viewing habits in high school. This chapter contains a summary of the major findings of the study. Both hypothesis of difference and association were used to make speculations about the frequencies the data. The study surveyed undergraduate college students attending

Demographics

Students were asked a range of demographic questions including class year, age, race, where they reside during the school year. The demographic characteristics of the student population are illustrated in Tables one through six.

Table 1

Class Year (N=78)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Class Year		
Freshmen	10	12.8
Sophomore	20	25.6
Junior	23	29.5
Senior	25	32.1
	78	100.0

Students who participated in the research study ranged from freshman to seniors, with the

highest representation in the senior class.

Table 2

Study Participants Ages (N=77)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age (years)		
18	6	7.8
19	14	18.2
20	18	23.4
21	20	26.0
22	14	18.2
26	3	3.9
27	1	1.3
30	1	1.3
	77	100.0

The mean of study participants' age was 20.74 and the median was 21.00.

Table 3

Gender (N=78)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	63	80.8
Male	15	19.2
	78	100.0

The metropolitan co-ed college where the study took place is primarily attended by women

which are reflected in the study sample.

Table 4

Race (N=76)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Race		
White	68	89.5
Black or African American	2	2.6
Multiple races	5	6.6
Other	1	1.3
	76	100.0

The metropolitan co-ed college that the study was conducted is racially represented by the

dominant race with little diversity.

Table 5

Place of Residence during Academic Year (N=78)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Residence during academic year		
On Campus	65	83.3
Off Campus	13	16.7
	78	100.0

Table 6

Academic Major (n=77)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Major		
Undeclared	1	1.3
Sports	8	10.4
Psychology	13	16.9
Math	2	2.6
Marketing	2	2.6
legal/criminal justice	4	5.2
Journalism	1	1.3
human services	5	6.5
hospitality /events mgt	5	6.5
History	3	3.9
graphic design	2	2.6
Fashion	11	14.3
entrepreneurship	3	3.9
Education	5	6.5
communications	11	14.3
Accounting	1	1.3
	77	100.0

The college offers over 40 different majors. There were 16 majors reported by students who took the survey.

Major Findings

Responses were evaluated within each version of the indirect aggression survey: the aggressor version (IAS-A), and the target version (IAS-T). Within both of these versions, analyses were conducted on each of the three subscales: social exclusion, malicious humor, and guilt induction. Hypotheses examining differences and relationship were formulated and used to guide data analysis. The following sections discuss the major findings across the two scales IAS-A and IAS-T. It should be noted that for p, a level of 0.05 is considered significant.

Indirect Aggression Scale Aggressor Version (IAS-A): The IAS-A version of the scale measures the usage of indirect aggression towards someone else (Forrest, et al., 2005). Survey respondents were presented with 25 self-report statements and asked to respond based on their experience over the last six months using a 5 point Likert-type scale (1 being *never* and 5 being *regularly*). The first questions posed sought to analyze the differences between the subscales in the Indirect Aggression Aggressor version and the following independent variables: age, gender, race, class year, academic major, place of residence during the academic year, television viewing habits, and reality television viewing habits. The overarching question posed was: Do IAS-A scores vary by these independent variables across the three subscales of social exclusion, malicious humor, and guilt induction?

Age: It was hypothesized that younger students were more likely to engage in indirect aggression than older students (that is younger students were expected to have significantly higher scores on the aggressor subscales). Three different age groupings were created. Age was as a continuous factor, as two separate groups (18-21 years and 22-30 years), and as three groups (18-20 years, 21-25 years, and 26-30 years). Pearson's Correlation was used to examine the relationships between age as a continuous factor and the three subscales. No significant correlations were found.

One way ANOVA was used to examine differences in the three IAS-A subscales by age in the three groupings. No significant difference was found, although findings did approach significance (f (2,73)=3.02, p=.055). It should be noted that for p, a level of 0.05 or lower is considered significant. Post hoc testing was conducted to explore this result but no significant differences were detected.

Gender: It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference in the scores on the IAS-A subscales between females and males. A T-test was run to determine if there was any difference and no significance was found.

Race: Race was grouped into two groups: white, and other. A T-test was used to determine if there were any significant differences based on race, and none were found.

Class year: It was hypothesized that lower classmen such as freshmen would be more likely to engage in indirect aggression than upper classmen such as seniors. A Spearman's Rho was run to determine if there were relationships between class year and the IAS-A subscales. No significance was found.

Academic Major: Academic majors were grouped into three different groupings based upon the following criteria: Majors where an individual might go for advanced schooling, Technical Training A, and Technical Training B. Majors where one might go for advanced schooling included: Psychology, Human Services, Education, Math, History, Accounting, Legal/Criminal studies, and undeclared. Technical Training Group A contained the following majors: Fashion, Graphic Design, and Hospitality/Events Management. Technical Training Group B contained the following majors: Journalism, Communications, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, and Sports.

It was hypothesized that students in Technical Training Group A would have higher scores on the aggressor subscales than students in other majors. A One way ANOVA was run to determine if there was a difference in any of the IAS-A subscales by the three major groupings. A significant difference was found in the guilt induction subscale (f $(2,73)=3.935$, $p=.024$). A Tamhane post hoc test showed that the significant difference was between those in Technical Training Group A (m=1.21) and those in Technical Training Group B (m=1.60).

Residence: It was hypothesized that students who lived on campus in a dorm setting would have higher scores on the aggressor subscales compared with students who live off campus. T-tests were run and significant differences were found on all three of the subscales. Social exclusion showed a significance of t (69.65)=4.398, p=.000. Students living on campus had a higher mean score (m=1.40) than those living off campus (m=1.12). The subscale malicious humor yielded a significance of t(76)=2.659, p=.010. Students living on campus had a higher mean score (m=1.55) than those living off campus (m=1.21). The subscale of guilt induction showed a significance of t (41.58)=4.709, p=.000. Students living on campus had a higher mean on this scale (m=1.48) than those living off campus (m=1.10).

Hours of television watched senior year of high school: It was hypothesized that the more television watched in high school, the higher a student's score on the aggressor subscales was likely to be. It should be noted that television viewing was condensed into three groupings: Group 1 watched between 1-7 hours per week, Group 2 watched between 8-24 hours per week, and Group 3 watched between 25-40 hours per week. A One Way ANOVA was run to see if there were difference in the three aggressor subscales. No significant difference was found.

Hours of reality television watched senior year of high school: It was hypothesized that students with high rates of reality television watching in high school would score higher on measures of the aggressor subscales. Reality television was broken into two separate groupings. The first grouping contained two groups: Group 1 contained students who indicated they watched no reality television and Group 2 were those who watched anywhere from one to 20 hours of reality TV per week when they were a senior in high school. A T-test was run to determine if there were differences in any of the three aggressor subscales compared to these two groupings of reality television viewing. No significant differences were found. The second

grouping created contained three different groups of reality television viewing: Group 1 watched no reality television, Group 2 watched 1-4 hours per week, and Group 3 watched 5-20 hours per week. A One Way ANOVA was run to see if any significant differences were found in any of the three aggressor subscales, no significant differences were found.

Indirect Aggression Scale Target Version (IAS-T): The IAS-T version of the scale measures the experience of being a victim of indirect aggression (Forrest, et al., 2005). Survey respondents were presented with 25 statements and asked to respond based on their experience over the last six months using a 5 point likert scale (1 being *never* and 5 being *regularly*). The first questions posed were looking to analyze the differences between the subscales in the Indirect Aggression Target version and the following independent variables: age, gender, race, class year, academic major, place of residence during the academic year, television viewing habits and reality television viewing habits. The overarching question posed was: Do IAS-T scores vary by these independent variables across the three subscales of social exclusion, malicious humor, and guilt induction?

Age: It was hypothesized that younger students would be more likely to be targets or victims of indirect aggression. That is, younger students were hypothesized to have higher scores on the target subscales than older students. Age was categorized exactly like the testing run in the aggression version: age as a continuous factor, as two separate groups (18-21 years and 22-30 years), and as three groups (18-20 years, 21-25 years, and 26-30 years). Pearson's Correlations were run to determine if there was relationship between age as a continuous factor and the three subscales. No significant correlations were found.

T-tests were used to determine if there were differences in the three target subscales by age in two categories. There was a significant difference in malicious humor t (74)=2.016,

p=.047. Study participants in the 18-21 age group had a higher mean (m=1.85) than those in the 22-30 age group (m=1.44). There were no significant differences in the other target subscales of social exclusion and guilt induction. One Way ANOVAs were run to determine if there were differences in the three target subscales by age in the three groupings. No significant differences were found.

Gender: It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference in the scores between females and males. T tests were run to determine if there were differences in the three target subscales by gender, no significant differences were found.

Race: Race was grouped into two groups: white and other. It was hypothesized that students in the other group would have higher scores on the target subscales than students who identified as white. T-tests were run to determine if there were differences in the subscales by race. No significant difference was found.

Class year: It was hypothesized that young classmen such as freshman are more likely to be targets of indirect aggression than upper classmen. A Spearman Rho Correlation was run to determine if there were relationships between class year and the three target subscales. No significant correlations were found.

Academic Major: Academic majors were grouped into three different groups based upon the following criteria: Majors where an individual might go for advanced schooling, Technical Training A, and Technical Training B. Majors where one might go for advanced schooling included: Psychology, Human Services, Education, Math, History, Accounting, Legal/Criminal studies, and undeclared. Technical Training Group A contained the following majors: Fashion, Graphic Design, and Hospitality/Events Management. Technical Training Group B contained the following majors: Journalism, Communications, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, and Sports.

It was hypothesized that students in the Technical Training Group A would report higher exposure as a target of indirect aggression than students with majors in the other two groupings. That is, that students in Technical Training Group A would have high scores on the target subscales. One Way ANOVAs were run to determine if there were differences in the target subscales by major in the three groups. No significant differences were found.

Residence: It was hypothesized that students who lived on campus in a dorm setting would have higher scores on the target subscales as compared with students who lived off campus. That is, students who live on campus were hypothesized to be more likely to identify being a victim of indirect aggression than those living off campus. T-tests were run to determine if there were differences in the three IAS-T subscales by residents. There was a significant difference in the malicious humor subscale ($t(59.75)=3.932$, $p=.000$). Those living on campus had a higher mean ($m=1.84$) than those living off campus ($m=1.33$). There were no significant differences found in the other two subscales of social exclusion and guilt induction.

Hours of television watched senior year of high school: It was hypothesized that the students who endorsed watching more hours of television in high school would report higher scores on Target subscales. It should be noted that television viewing was condensed into three groupings: Group 1 watched between 1-7 hours per week, Group 2 watched between 8-24 hours per week, and Group 3 watched between 25-40 hours per week. One Way ANOVAs were run to determine if there were differences in the target subscales by hours of television viewed among the three groupings created. A significant difference was found in social exclusion ($f(2,75)=4.051$, $p=.021$). However, the post hoc tests could not identify were the differences were significant. The means from the three viewing categories were as follows: 1-7 hrs

(m=1.6), 8-24 hrs (m=1.7) and 25-40 hrs (m=2.4). There were no significant differences found in the other two subscales of malicious humor and guilt induction.

Hours of reality television watched senior year of high school: It was hypothesized that the more reality television a student watched in high school the higher their scores would be on the Target subscales. Reality television was examined as three different groups of television viewing based on hours: Group 1 watched no reality television, Group 2 watched 1-4 hours per week, and Group 3 watched 5-20 hours per week. A One Way ANOVA was run to see if any significant differences were found in any of the three target subscales, no significant differences were found.

IAS-T and IAS-A: Hours of Television and Reality Television on a Continuum:
Additional testing was conducted on students' television viewing habits as a continuous variable. Pearson's correlations were run between the hours study participants watched television their senior year of high school and both the aggressor and target subscales. There were significant positive, weak correlations between the hours of television watched and malicious humor A (r=.234, p=.040), social exclusion T (r=.311, p=.006), and guilt induction T (r=.239, p=.036). There were no significant differences found with the other two aggressor subscales of social exclusion and guilt induction or the target subscale of malicious humor.

Pearson correlations were run to examine the relationship of hours of reality television watching and Aggressor and Target subscales. There were significant positive correlations between the hours of reality television that students watched and social exclusion A (r=.250, p=.027), malicious humor A (r=.290, p=.019), and guilt induction T (r=.239, p=.036). There were no significant differences found in guilt induction A, or the other two target subscales of social exclusion and malicious humor.

Summary. In summary, participant responses revealed that college students are experiencing indirect aggression on this metropolitan co-ed campus, both as aggressors and as victims. In addition, those who live on campus report using more indirect aggression towards others than students who live off campus. Consistent with the earlier findings in the literature, there are no differences in the use of indirect aggressor by gender or age. This study demonstrated for the first time that high rates of reality TV viewing were associated with using social exclusion tactics and malicious humor towards others. In addition, students who reported higher rates of reality TV viewing were more likely to identify as being victims of guilt induction.

The next section discusses the findings, implications for social work practice, strengths and weaknesses of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter discusses study findings and how they compare to previous studies investigating indirect aggression. The strengths and limitations inherent in the study, implications for social work practice, and recommendations for future research on this covert form of bullying are also discussed.

Current Findings and Previous Literature

For the most part, "bullying" studies have been conducted on elementary and high school students, and among some professional groups (Forrest, et al., 2005). There is sparse literature examining these phenomena among college students. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine college students' perceptions about a destructive, covert form of bullying known as "indirect aggression." Indirect aggression is a type of social manipulation in which the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992b). Indirect aggression can take many forms, including gossiping, rumor spreading, excluding individuals from a group or activity, ignoring an individual, and inclusion (Archer & Coyne, 2005). The literature suggests that this covert form of bullying manifests in childhood and becomes the preferred form of bullying as students age and continues through adulthood (Archer & Coyne, 2005). As people age, this behavior becomes more sophisticated and covert, making it difficult to observe and easier to use against another individual.

While indirect aggression has been examined in middle school and high school populations, almost no research has been undertaken with college-age students.   Indirect aggression often goes "underground" on campuses and can be difficult to identify. It is a destructive form of bullying that may well extend into the undergraduate years and affect student adjustment and performance.

One of the main things highlighted in the literature review was that, by young adulthood, both males and females utilize similar levels of indirect aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005). This study found similar results, with no significant differences found between men and women's use of or being a victim of indirect aggression, and no significant variance based on age. Studies examining the use of this covert form of bullying in college students are not only scarce but also limited in their focus to variables such as age and gender differences.

The major finding of this study is that college students from this metropolitan co-ed campus in the northeast are participating in and are victims of indirect aggression. Most of the literature focuses on identifying differences in the use of indirect aggression based on gender or age. This research looked at additional factors not addressed in other literature such as race, class year, academic major, and place of residence during the academic year.

Although there were no significant differences found with the variables of race and class year, there was some significance found between the groups of academic majors and a student's place of residence and the IAS-A and IAS-T subscales. One of the most significant findings of this study is that students who live on the campus of this metropolitan co-ed college are engaging in more indirect aggression across all three of the subscales (malicious humor, guilt induction, and social exclusion) than students who live off campus. In addition it was found that students living on campus indicated that they were more often the victims or targets of malicious humor

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than students who live off campus. And, there were some significance in the differences found between the groupings of majors and the subscales. Results showed that students in Technical Group A tended to report less frequent use of guilt induction strategies than those in Technical Group B.

The research on the viewing habits of reality television among adolescents and young adults underscores the need for continued examination and understanding of the ways in which the perceived realism of this programming affects young viewers (Hall, 2006). Research on reality television genre suggests that these shows normalize aggressive behavior and often display such behavior as a way to get ahead in life. A study by Nielsen Ratings shows that the average American in 2010 was watching roughly 34 hours of television per week (Stelter, 2011). While reality television draws viewers from many demographic groups, it is disproportionately popular among adolescents (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). The fact that reality programs consistently place at, or near, the top of the Nielsen ratings illustrates the considerable allure the unscripted, perceived realism and seemingly spontaneous emotional moments, exploits, and tribulations of "real" people hold considerable for millions of viewers (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). Many but not all of the reality television shows are glorifying different forms and variations of indirect and relational aggression as a way to come out of the winner and above the rest of the pack.

Studies show that reality television provides an avenue of strong audience identification that can have both positive and negative influences in individual lives depending on the core message of the show (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). Indirect aggression was found to exist in 92% of television programs aired in British airwaves that are popular among adolescents (Coyne & Archer, 2004). That is compared to 47% that contain physical forms of aggression (Gunter,

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Harrison, & Wykes, 2003). Indirect aggression has been portrayed as more justified and rewarded forms of behavior in a variety of reality television shows (Coyne et al., 2004). Studies show that viewing indirect aggression on television predicts can cause individuals particularly adolescents to use indirect aggression in real life (Coyne, et al., 2004).

For the current research study, students were asked questions about their television and reality television viewing habits during their senior year of high school. The current study sought to begin to look at the correlation between reality television viewing and students' experiences with indirect aggression. This study found when examining television and reality television viewing as a continuous variable that there were significant differences found in the various subscales within both IAS-A and IAS-T. In terms of general television viewing, it was found that students who reported watching more television were more likely to engage in malicious humor and identify as being victims of social exclusion, malicious humor, and guilt induction. Study participants who watched more reality television were more likely to engage in social exclusion and malicious humor towards other and identify as victims of social exclusion.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths: This quantitative study was facilitated by having an easy and effective way to recruit and reach a majority of the students on the campus. In addition, through the use of a quantitative methods and SurveyMonkey interface, a greater level of anonymity and confidentiality was secured so that study participants had a greater chance of answering the survey questions to honestly reflect their experiences. It is believed that having used a qualitative method study participants would have downplayed their experiences of being an aggressor of indirect aggression.

SurveyMonkey made it possible for the survey to be taken from any electronic device at any time the participant chose. Participating in a quantitative study allowed for a greater number of responses across a variety of age ranges and majors. Another strength of this study design is the introduction of additional factors that have the potential to influence a students' experience with indirect aggression such as race, place of residence, academic major, and class year. Studies that have been conducted on indirect aggression historically tend to focus on the variables of age and gender. This current study expands the factors that future studies may potentially examine.

Limitations: Both males and racial minorities are underrepresented in the study results. The study had a small sample size that was limited to one college campus in the Northeast. In addition, most students who attend this educational institution were from a working class background and identify as being from the dominant race. The majority of students at this college and respondents of the study were female.

Because the study was quantitative in nature, there were no open ended questions allowing students to voice their personal experiences with indirect aggression. Had it been possible to include open ended questions, it is possible that more insight into the occurrence and students understanding of this form of bullying may have been developed. This limitation does not take away from some of the potential richness that is garnered in a qualitative study. Because of the numerous factors that influence an individual's behavior it is not possible to say definitely whether or not reality television influences an individual's use of and identification of indirect aggression.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Research adds to our fund of knowledge about the experience of college students with this covet form of bullying This study will help to inform direct practice with this population in terms of targeted outreach and health education strategies; will inform further research; and may be used to inform the college faculty and health educators. As such, the study has the potential to extend our understanding of this phenomenon in college populations in general. The study has potential important implications for the development of policies and interventions at this co-ed metropolitan college in the northeast.

This study has the potential to make students, faculty, and staff aware that bullying does in fact occur on college campuses and it is often covert and hard to identify. The hope is that this study will begin the process of creating both interventions and preventative measures for indirect aggression. This has the potential to provide more support and understanding for the victims of indirect aggression. It could also help more students, faculty, staff, and administrators better identify this behavior when it occurs.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following are recommendations for future research.

1. It would be beneficial to expand this study to include various university and college campuses from different regions of the United States. This would allow not only for a larger sample, but also has the potential to make the results more generalizable to the general college population. It would also provide a greater diversity in the actual sample and, a larger, less homogenous sample would allow the researcher to expand the variables being examined to include such things as geographic location and cultural background.

2. Expanding the study could also make it possible to look within institutions in colleges. These include fraternities, sororities, and sports teams, among others. It would be interesting to examine students experiences within the Greek system compared to students who do not belong to a fraternity or sorority.

3. Lastly it would be interesting to follow a group of college longitudinally to examine the individual's experiences as they more through college and into the workforce. How would the characteristics examined here look over time? Would some disappear with maturity?

4. In addition to administering the IAS-A and IAS-T scales, it would be beneficial to include a number of open ended questions. This would allow for the study to capture more individual experiences and allow for more personal narratives. It would be really interesting to see what students classify as their experiences of indirect aggression both as an instigator and as a victim.

5. Another avenue for future research is to study the effects that indirect aggression is having on individuals in terms of their self esteem, body image, self worth, value of friendships, and academic performance. This study did not capture these aspects and it is important that the effects be examined so that interventions can be created.

In terms of reality television it would be interesting to look at the various types of reality television shows that individuals are viewing and their scores on the IAS-A and IAS-T subscales. This would provide an opportunity to examine if there are particular types of show that tends to promote this behavior more than others.

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Informed Consent

Dear participant:

       You are being invited to take part in a research project that examines college students' experiences with a form of bullying called "indirect aggression." The researcher is Melissa McLaughlin, Clinical Intern in the Counseling Center. Please read this information about the study and feel free to ask questions. If you have questions about the study, I can be reached until May 10th at (XXX) XXX-XXX or MMcLaughlin@XXX.XXX. Or you may contact my research advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Irvin at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, ext. XXX or by email at eirvin@XXX.XXX.

       The purpose of this research is to learn more about college students' experiences with indirect aggression, a type of bullying that uses social manipulation and other covert means to bully others. Since we know that any form of bullying is harmful to development and learning, if the study tells us that this is a problem with college students, we would want to work with the staff and faculty to effectively address this issue.

       Participation in this study will take about 20 minutes of your time. You will not be paid for your participation. If you decide to participant in this study, you will be completing an online survey. The survey has two parts; one part asks you a few questions about you such as your age and how long you have been in school. The second part has 50 questions that you will rate on a scale from 1-5.

       It is possible that, by participating in the study, you may have feelings related to your personal experiences with bullying. In case you feel the need for additional support after participating in the study, I have provided the information for the on-campus Counseling Center at the bottom of this letter.

       Although there are no financial benefits for taking part in this study, your participation will allow you to share your valuable knowledge and unique perspective about this important issue. You may find that you think about bullying in a new way or discover other things about yourself while completing the questionnaire.

       Your part in this research is **confidential**. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you or the college you attend. Information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data.

       This study is also designed to be **anonymous**. The survey software does not collect names, email addresses, or IP addresses or any other identifying information. We don't ask your name. After you return the research materials, there is no way to link your identity to your answers. If you contact me or my research advisor about the study, you would not need to give your name.

You may choose not to answer any question simply by skipping it. As a voluntary participant you have the right to withdraw from the study while you are taking the survey, but would need to do this before you submit your response. Since your participation is anonymous, and we don't know who you are, once you click the "submit" button, we would not be able to remove your responses.

Once you have submitted your survey, your responses will be kept in password protected and encrypted media and only available to the researcher. In any presentations or publications, data will be presented as a whole to disguise participant identities. Once the study is completed, survey data will be stored on encrypted password protected, removable media, and stored in a locked and secure environment for 3 years following the completion of the research. This is consistent with Federal regulations; after that time they will be destroyed.

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form, and at any time during or after the study. You can reach the researcher, Melissa McLaughlin, in the Counseling Center at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by email at: MMcLaughlin@XXX.XXX. Or, you can contact the research advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Irvin, by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, ext. XXX or by email at: eirvin@XXX.XXX.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), XXX, which oversees research involving human participants. The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects may be reached at the following address: XXXXXXXXX. You can also contact the Chair by telephone or e-mail at XXXXXXXXXXXX

BY CHECKING "I AGREE," YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGTHS AND THAT YOU VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

☐ **I AGREE**

☐ **I DO NOT AGREE**

Thank you for your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

Melissa McLaughlin

Resources

Please print and keep a copy of this document, called the "informed consent." It contains useful information.

The Counseling Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:30 p.m. when school is in session. The Center is located on the top floor of XXXXXX. The Counseling Center offers students a confidential and safe place to discuss any concerns, problems, or feelings they might have in response to this survey. Appointments can be made by stopping by the Counseling Center or calling (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Appendix B

Institution HSR Approval Letter
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

Febuary 12, 2012
Melissa McLaughlin
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Re: Indirect Aggression Study
Review Type: Expedited
Protocol #: SP12-03
Action: Approved
Approval Expires: Feb 2013

Dear Ms. McLaughlin:

The XXXXXXX Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) has approved the above referenced study for one year. You are recorded as the Principal Investigator and are responsible for overseeing all related research activities involving human participants and the proper handling of data. The Faculty Research Advisor is recorded as Elizabeth Irvin of Smith College.

This approval is valid for one year. Continuation of projects beyond one year will require a research progress report (located on the XXXXXX site) requesting project continuation and must include any changes in the research protocol and a current participant consent form.

If your research changes from the approved format, you must submit a modification report (located on the XXXXXX site) before continuing with the study. Additionally, if unanticipated events involving risk to human participants or others take place during the course of your research project, such events must be reported to the CPHS immediately. The CPHS will determine if any modification to the approved protocol or consent process is required.

When your research is complete, you must submit a final report (located on the XXXXXX site) within 3 months.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact me. Thank you for applying to the CPHS.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXX

_____
Sarah XXXXXXXX M.Sc.
Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences
Chair, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

Appendix C

Posting for the College-Wide Website

I need YOUR help with my research study!!

- Are you 18 years of age older?

- Are you currently enrolled as an undergraduate student?

- Have you completed at least one semester of college here at XXXX or another college?

If you answered yes to all of these questions then I need your help!

I am looking at college students' experiences with a form of bullying called "indirect aggression" and would like to know what college students have to say about this important topic. I need your input!

If you can help, click on this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IndirectAggressionSurvey to learn more about the survey. It will take about 20 minutes of your time to take the survey. The survey is completely anonymous; you don't have to give your name or identify yourself in any way.

I would really appreciate your help with this!!

Please click here https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IndirectAggressionSurvey to be taken directly to the online survey.

Thank you!
Melissa McLaughlin
Clinical Intern in the Counseling Center
MMcLaughlin@XXX.XXX

Email to Faculty and Staff

SUBJ: Research project about bullying on college campuses

TO: [Insert email address of faculty or staff member]

Dear _____,

My name is Melissa McLaughlin. I am a counseling intern in the Counseling Center at the College and am also a degree candidate at Smith College School for Social Work. I am about to launch an important study that examines college students experiences with indirect aggression, a destructive form of bullying. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to inform undergraduate students in your classes about the study. Your participation would involve forwarding an introductory email from the researcher to your students. We are also asking for your support by posting a link to the study on your class Moodle page.

If you are willing to forward an email to your students about the study, please reply to this email and I will forward the recruitment email to you for distribution. I will also send you text for your Moodle post.

If you cannot assist with the study recruitment at this time, it would also be helpful to hear from you so that I know you received this invitation.

This research has been approved by Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) at XXXXXXXXX.

About the study: Indirect aggression is a type of social manipulation in which the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim. Indirect aggression can take many forms, including gossiping, rumor spreading, excluding individuals from a group or activity, or ignoring an individual. The literature suggests that indirect aggression becomes the preferred form of bullying as students age, and may extend well into the undergraduate years and affect student adjustment and performance. This form of bullying often goes "underground" on campuses and can be difficult to identify.

Findings from the study have the potential to extend our understanding of this phenomenon on our college campus and will help inform the development of Health Education and counseling program strategies for the College.

About student participation: The recruitment email describes the study and gives students a web address where they can read the study questions and answer anonymously online if they wanted to participate. Their participation, of course, is entirely voluntary. It would take about 20 minutes to complete the survey. You would not know which students, if any, from your classes agreed to participate in the study.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this project. Thank you so much for your time and interest.

Sincerely, Melissa McLaughlin
Clinical Counseling Intern
(XXX) XXX-XXXX | MMcLaughlin@XXX.XXX

Appendix E

Thank you email to Faculty and Staff

Professor_____

Thank you for your support of my research project. I will send you two emails. The first will be the recruitment email that you can send off to your students as soon as you get a chance. The second is the text that you are welcome and encouraged to put on your class Moodle page/s.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Melissa McLaughlin
XXXXX College Counseling Center Intern
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Appendix F

Recruitment Email to Undergraduate Students

SUBJ: Volunteers needed for research study

TO: [Insert email address of students here]

Dear Students:

       I am distributing this email on behalf of a researcher who is interested in contacting undergraduates about an important research project on bullying on college campuses. The researcher wants you to know about the study and is hoping that you may be interested in volunteering to participate. The study is online and would take about 20 minutes of your time to complete. I would not know if you decide to participate in the study or not. Your participation is entirely voluntary and entirely confidential.

       I would like to encourage anyone who may be interested to participate. I think this is an important project. This is a note from the researcher:

> "You are being invited to take part in a research project that examines college students' experiences with a form of bullying called "indirect aggression." The survey is online, simple to complete, and should take about 20 minutes of your time. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your results are anonymous. No one will know you participated unless you tell them!
>
> In order to participate in this study you must be at least 18 years of age, have attended college for at least one semester, and be enrolled as an undergraduate student at XXXXXXXXX.
> .
> If you would like to consider participating in the study, click on this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IndirectAggressionSurvey to read more about what is involved. The study will close on April 1, 2012. You may get several emails inviting you to participate in the study. However, you should only take the survey once.
>
> It is OK to forward this email to other undergraduates at XXXXX whom you think might be interested in participating. We would like to have responses from as many students as possible!
>
> Melissa McLaughlin
> Clinical Intern in the Counseling Center
> MMcLaughlin@XXXX.XXX | (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Appendix G

Faculty Moodle Posting

Dear Students,

I am distributing this information on behalf of a researcher who is interested in contacting undergraduates about an important research project. The researcher is studying bullying on college campuses and is hoping that undergraduates at XXXX will be interested in taking the survey. The survey is online and will take about 20 minutes to complete.

I will not know if you decide to participate in the study or not. Your participation is entirely voluntary and entirely confidential.

You can read more about the study by clicking on this link
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IndirectAggressionSurvey.

This is an important project and I hope you will consider participating.

Appendix H

Demographic questions

- Are you a: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, or Senior? [select one]
- How old are you?   [age in years]
- Gender: Female, Male   [select one]
- What is your race/ethnicity? Caucasian, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander, or some other race? [select one with the option of filling in text for other]
- Where do you live during the school year: On campus, Off campus? [select one]
- What is your major? [free form]

IAS-A Scale

Instructions:

Please read each statement. Think about yourself when you have used the behavior <u>toward</u>
<u>another student</u>. Select the rating that reflects your behavior. Answer all of the items.
Select the number that honestly shows how often the statement has been true for you *since*
September 2011.

1=Never   2=Once or Twice   3=Sometimes   4=Often   5=Regularly
In the past 6 months, <u>I have</u> . . . . . .

_____	1	Used my relationship with a student to try and get them to change a decision
_____	2	Used sarcasm to insult another student
_____	3	Tried to influence another student by making them feel guilty
_____	4	Withheld information from a student that the rest of the group was let in on
_____	5	Purposefully left another student out of activities
_____	6	Made other people not talk to another student
_____	7	Excluded another student from a group
_____	8	Used their feelings to coerce another student
_____	9	Made negative comments about another student' physical appearance
_____	10	Used private in-jokes to exclude another student
_____	11	Used emotional blackmail on another student
_____	12	Imitated another student in front of others
_____	13	Spread rumors about another student
_____	14	Played a nasty practical joke on another student
_____	15	Done something to try and make another student look stupid
_____	16	Pretended to be hurt and/or angry with another student to make them feel bad about him/her-self
_____	17	Made another student feel that they don't fit in
_____	18	Intentionally embarrassed another student around others
_____	19	Stopped talking to them
_____	20	Put undue pressure on another student
_____	21	Omitted another student from conversations on purpose
_____	22	Made fun of another student in public
_____	23	Called another student names
_____	24	Criticized another student in public
_____	25	Turned other people against another student

Instructions:
Please read each statement. Think about when you may have experienced this behavior being
directed towards yourself by another student. Select the number which reflects your experience.
Answer all of the items. Select the number that honestly shows how often the statement has been
true for you *since September 2011*.

1=Never   2=Once or Twice   3=Sometimes   4=Often   5=Regularly
In the past 6 months, another student has . . . .

_____	1	Made other students not talk to me
_____	2	Withheld information from me that the rest of the group is let in on
_____	3	Intentionally embarrassed me around others
_____	4	Excluded me from a group
_____	5	Called me names
_____	6	Stopped talking to me
_____	7	Used their relationship with me to try and get me to change a decision
_____	8	Used my feelings to coerce me
_____	9	Made fun of me in public
_____	10	Pretended to be hurt and/or angry with me to make me feel bad about myself
_____	11	Turned other people against me
_____	12	Made me feel that I don't fit in
_____	13	Spread rumors about me
_____	14	Used emotional blackmail on me
_____	15	Criticized me in public
_____	16	Used private in-jokes to exclude me
_____	17	Put undue pressure on me
_____	18	Used sarcasm to insult me
_____	19	Played a nasty practical joke on me
_____	20	Made negative comments about my physical appearance
_____	21	Omitted me from conversations on purpose
_____	22	Imitated me in front of others
_____	23	Purposefully left me out of activities
_____	24	Done something to try and make me look stupid
_____	25	Tried to influence me by making me feel guilty

Appendix J

Television Viewing questions

We would also like to know something about your TV viewing preferences.

1) When you were a senior in high school, how many <u>hours a week</u>, on average, would you estimate you watched television?

      _____ hours per week, on average

2) When you were a senior in high school, how many hours a week, on average, would you estimate that you watched "Reality TV" shows?

☐ I did not watch "Reality TV" shows
I watched, on average, about _____ hours per week of "Reality TV" shows

3) If you watched "Reality TV" shows when you were a senior in high school, please list three "Reality TV" shows that you looked forward to seeing the most. Start by listing you most favorite show first:

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

4) Please list the three "Reality TV" shows that you thought were kind of stupid:

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____