

## Research Study on Cyber-Based Dating Aggression for Teens

### **Dear Parents,**

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of a study being conducted with teens within Rocky View Schools. The details of the study are outlined below. Please note that if you want more details about something mentioned here, or **if you do not want your child to participate in this study, please contact the researchers:**

*Mrs. Valerie D. Willan (403) 560 6290 – [vdattewe@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vdattewe@ucalgary.ca)*

or

*Dr. Kelly Dean Schwartz (403) 220 3669 – [kdschwar@ucalgary.ca](mailto:kdschwar@ucalgary.ca)*

Please take the time to read this newsletter and understand any accompanying information.

The study will investigate how teenagers (age 17 and above) use technology in an aggressive manner in their dating relationships (e.g., logging into their partners Facebook account without permission, sending a rude text message to his or her partner). If your child is in a romantic relationship at the time of data collection, then they will be asked if they would like to participate in the study.

This study is not part of your child's curriculum. **Participation, non-participation, or withdrawal will have no impact whatsoever on your child's attendance or continuing relationship with Rocky View Schools. Should your child choose to participate, they can withdraw at any time.** Exploration into this growing area of study will build a foundation for future research to come. It will increase awareness and understanding of this understudied topic and aide in the development of educational and prevention programs relevant to healthy romantic relationships for adolescents.

The following provides you with details of the study, the type of information that will be collected for the purposes of the study, and the ways in which this information will be used:

### **What Will My Child Be Asked To Do?**

Data will be collected from your child daily through an iOS and Android mobile application ("app") that was developed for the current study by a legal corporation contracted to design, produce, and deploy the App. Your child will be asked to download the free app on their own personal mobile phone and they will be given a training session on how to use it. Data plans are not needed, as your child can complete surveys offline and data is sent to the examiner once they have connected to a free Wi-Fi connection. Your child's geographic location will not be tracked. Prior to participation, your child will be asked to read and sign an assent form on the day of data collection. It will be clearly stated in the consent forms that their participation is completely voluntary and that they are able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If your child choses to participate and signs the consent form, they will be given a link to a website where they can download the app.

On the app, your child will then complete a demographics questionnaire, which asks about such information as their age, gender, and romantic relationship experience. Your child will then be asked to complete a short survey entry daily or whenever they experience cyber aggression within their relationship. Thus, there is potential for your child to complete multiple survey entries a day. However, access to the app will be blocked during school hours to eliminate the chance of your child completing surveys at inappropriate times. They will also be strongly discouraged to complete surveys at inappropriate times outside of school hours (e.g., when they are driving, or at times

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when parental rules are in place, such as at the dinner table). The survey takes approximately 3-5 minutes to complete. Your child's responses are stored on a web disk, which is a secure File Transfer Program (FTP) with the University of Calgary. Each *day* your child completes a survey, they will earn 1 ballot to be put into a prize draw. At the end week, names will be drawn for gift cards. The risks associated with participation are minimal and similar to those associated with many e-mail programs, such as Hotmail© and social utilities spaces, such as Facebook© and Twitter©.

At the end of the 1-month data collection period, the primary researcher will debrief all student participants and explain the purpose of the study as well as how the information collected will be used. During this time, your child will receive an Explanation of Study form with a list of resources in the Calgary, Alberta area if any distress were to arise during and/or after completion of the online survey. Your child will also be able to access these resources through the app during the entire data collection period should they feel distressed at any time.

The information collected will be used by the primary researcher as part of her dissertation thesis requirement, and for the generation of reports, research publications, or presentations. All information collected will remain confidential. That is, all survey responses and any identifiable information, such as the type of school your child currently attends and his/her grade, will not be displayed and your child shall remain anonymous. Furthermore, in order to protect the confidentiality of your child, you will not be permitted to see any of your child's survey responses. If at any time you or your child chooses to exercise his or her right to withdrawal from the study, your child will be asked if he or she wants to withdrawal all previous data they have submitted, or just withdrawal from any further participation.

#### **What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

Information regarding your child's age, grade, gender, ethnicity, religious preference, sexual orientation, parental education, and dating relationship questions will be collected for the purpose of the study. Again, any identifying information, such as your child's current grade or parental income, will not be displayed and your child shall remain anonymous when utilized in the generation of reports, research publications, or presentations.

#### **Are there Risks or Benefits if My Child Participates?**

Your child could experience some mild distress when answering questions about past or present negative cyber-based communication they have engaged in with a romantic partner. However, they are not obliged to answer any questions that they do not want to answer. In addition, they will be given a list of community resources at the end of each survey if any distress were to arise during or after participating in the study. Your child will not directly benefit from participating in this study. Information obtained from this study will add to our general knowledge about cyber-based dating aggression. Such information could be used to help develop prevention and treatment programs aimed at promoting healthy romantic relationships. In addition, some people report that they learn something about themselves in the process.

#### **What Happens to the Information My Child Provides?**

Information gained from this study will be removed of all identifiable characteristics and remain anonymous. The results will be retained by the primary researcher and will be kept in an encrypted file only accessible to the primary researcher and her supervisor. The data generated from this study will be used by the primary researcher in the creation of her dissertation thesis, research publications, and presentations. Furthermore, after a period of seven years, all data collected by the

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primary researcher will be destroyed. A copy of the final research report will be made available to school(s)/school districts.

Should you have any questions or concerns or **if you do not want your child to participate in this study, please contact the researchers:**

**Primary Researcher:** *Mrs. Valerie D. Willan (403) 560 6290 – [vdattewe@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vdattewe@ucalgary.ca)* or  
**Supervisor:** *Dr. Kelly Dean Schwartz (403) 220 3669 – [kdschwar@ucalgary.ca](mailto:kdschwar@ucalgary.ca)*

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