

**A Novel Approach to the Nature of Kindness: An Examination of Factors Affecting the
Practice of Kindness among High School Students**

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I confirm that my research project was completed independently. After approval from an IRB committee, my teacher helped arrange for the distribution of my survey to the sample. My supervising scientist and mentor showed me how to run statistical data using SPSS. Research involving non-human vertebrates or human subjects was conducted under the supervision of an experienced teacher or researcher and followed state and federal regulatory guidance applicable to the humane and ethical conduct of such research.

Abstract

This paper proposes to examine the practice of kindness among high school students. Using a researcher-developed instrument, this study investigated the practice of three types of kindness-intentional kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet kindness-among teens. In addition, the relationship between adolescent self-compassion and the practice of kindness was also examined. One hundred thirteen students from a suburban public high school participated in this study. The relationship between adolescent self-compassion and adolescent levels of kindness was positive and significant as teens who reported higher levels of self-compassion also expressed higher levels of kindness. Among the three examples of kindness, adolescents reported the lowest levels of practicing quiet kindness; adolescent practice of intentional kindness reported the highest involvement, and this was followed by adolescent practice of random acts of kindness. In addition, quiet acts of kindness possessed the highest correlation with self-compassion. Gender was a significant determinant of adolescent practice of kindness as females expressed higher levels of kindness than males; males, however, reported higher levels of self-compassion than females. Although GPA was not a significant variable in predicting adolescent practice of kindness or expression of self-compassion, age, in general, influenced adolescent practice of kindness and self-compassion as older adolescents demonstrated higher levels of kindness and self-compassion. Future

research can focus on practices to promote adolescent practice of kindness, particularly the less known adolescent practice of quiet kindness.

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Introduction

Why are we kind to others? Is it out of selflessness or selfishness? Are those who are kind to themselves more likely to be kind to others? Anne Herbert, a prominent American writer, coined the phrase “Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty” (Herbert & Pavel, 1993), which has served as the basis of the idea of a random act of kindness. The idea that acts of kindness can be senseless means that they often do not make sense. Does it truly make sense to help another person? Why would one make the decision to perform a kind act? This study seeks to make sense of acts of kindness. Envision a scene present in nearly every high school movie: a student drops his books in the hallway. Another student contemplates whether to help pick up these books or not. Should he? It may be uncomfortable for an adolescent to aid an unfamiliar person (Cotney & Banerjee, 2019). Perhaps the student does not appear to need help picking up his books. Yet choosing to assist a peer seems like the right thing to do. Adolescents often find themselves in unplanned situations like these, in which opportunities to perform random acts of kindness are presented.

It is important for parents, educators, and administrators to encourage prosocial behaviors among students. Acts of kindness are examples of prosocial behaviors that can make a significant impact on students as they navigate the academic, social, and familial interactions of their daily lives. Unfortunately, schools today primarily implement the widespread practice of emphasizing the prevention of unkind and antisocial behaviors. This course of action is clear and comprehensible as the pervasive practice of bullying among students has resulted in alarming statistics resulting in devastating reports of suicide and school violence. There might be something else for school communities to do, however, in their very important responsibility of fostering prosocial behaviors among students: schools can enable students to conceptualize what kindness is and how kindness can be practiced. In elementary-age children (ages 9 to 11), performing greater acts of kindness was found to increase the wellbeing, as well as popularity, of the performer (Layous et al., 2012). Among adolescents, both high levels of wellbeing and popularity are desirable. In addition to the importance of fostering a community of kindness for the reasons of

preventing dangerous activities, students may also learn the unexpected benefits of prosocial behavior in the form of practicing kindness.

There exist studies analyzing the impact of kind acts, as well as expectations of the impact. According to Cotney & Banerjee (2019), difficulties in anticipating a recipient's reaction to an act of kindness may cause reluctance to perform further acts of kindness. In addition, people may be reluctant to perform acts of kindness when they have misguided expectations of the responses to their act (Dungan et al., 2022). Specifically, Dungan et al. (2022) found that people were pessimistic in their expectations of responses to acts of kindness, meaning they expected a negative reaction when there would actually be a positive one. This misunderstanding led to the avoidance of performing an act of kindness. To encourage the performance of acts of kindness among adolescents, it is critical to recognize the positive effects of acts of kindness on the recipient.

Beyond random acts of kindness, there exist two other distinct modes in which kind acts occur. Silent acts of kindness, often referred to as “quiet kindness,” are acts of kindness which do not draw attention to the actor and the recipient may be unaware of who performed the act, meaning there is no expectation of recognition of the actor (Binfet & Enns, 2018). Acts of kindness in which the actor is encouraged to perform the act by an external party is known as intentional kindness (Binfet, 2015; Binfet & Enns, 2018; Binfet & Whitehead, 2019; Layous et al., 2012). Organized acts of kindness, such as a school-sponsored drive, would be an example of an intentional act of kindness. According to Binfet (2015), schools that encourage these intentional acts of kindness have students with higher emotional and social wellbeing.

Current research has focused on acts of kindness in children, typically children in grades two through eight (Binfet & Whitehead, 2019; Binfet & Gadermann, 2016). There also is an absence of research on the prevalence of kind acts among adolescents in grades nine through twelve. There exist studies on the relationship between self-compassion and prosocial behavior, although not specific to adolescents or the three defined modes of kindness (Yang et al., 2019). Research on self-compassion, which is defined as being kind to oneself (Yang et al., 2019), has found a connection between

self-compassion and well-being (Neff & Germer, 2017). There is a lack of research, however, on any potential connection between levels of self-compassion and the performance of acts of kindness.

This present study wishes to investigate the prevalence of random acts of kindness, quiet acts of kindness, and intentional acts of kindness among adolescents. This study also seeks to determine the connection, if any, between levels of self-compassion, measured using the Self-Compassion Scale developed by Neff & Germer (2017) and adolescent expressions of kindness in the three defined categories of acts of kindness. Additionally, this study seeks to analyze factors including gender, age, and academic performance that may influence an adolescent's aptness to perform acts of kindness.

Hypotheses

1. Adolescents who express higher levels of kindness will also indicate higher levels of self-compassion.
2. Among adolescent expressions of kindness, adolescents will report practicing different levels of kindness among the following categories:
 - a. Adolescents will indicate the highest levels of practicing intentional kindness.
 - b. Adolescents will report the second highest levels of practicing random acts of kindness.
 - c. Adolescents will report the lowest levels of practicing quiet kindness.
3. Among adolescent expressions of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness), quiet acts of kindness will have the highest correlation with self-compassion.
4. The subscales of self-compassion, self-kindness, mindfulness, and the sense of common humanity, will have a positive and significant correlation to adolescent expression of kindness.
5. Among the subscales of self-compassion, self-judgment, isolation and the propensity to over-identify will have an inverse and weak relationship to adolescent expression of kindness.

6. Gender will influence adolescent expression of kindness, and the individual subscales of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness). Specifically,
- Females will express higher levels of kindness than males will.
 - Males will report lower levels of intentional kindness.
 - Males will report lower levels of random acts of kindness.
 - Females will report higher levels of quiet kindness.
7. Gender will also influence self-compassion and the individual subscales of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, the sense of common humanity, isolation, self-judgment, and the propensity to over-identify). Specifically,
- Females will report higher levels of self-compassion.
 - Among the subscales of self-compassion, females will report higher levels of self-kindness, mindfulness and the sense of common humanity.
 - Among the subscales of self-compassion, females will report lower levels of self-judgment, isolation and the propensity to over-identify.
8. Age will influence adolescent expression of kindness and the individual subscales of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness). Specifically,
- Older adolescents will express the highest level of kindness.
 - Younger adolescents will express the lowest level of intentional kindness.
 - Younger adolescents will express the lowest level of random acts of kindness.
 - Younger adolescents will express the lowest level of quiet kindness.

9. Age will influence self-compassion and the individual subscales of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, the sense of common humanity, isolation, self-judgment, and the propensity to over-identify). Specifically,
- Older adolescents will report the highest levels of self-compassion.
 - Among the subscales of self-compassion, older adolescents will report the highest levels of self-kindness, mindfulness and the sense of common humanity.
 - Among the subscales of self-compassion, older adolescents will report the lowest levels of self-judgment, isolation and the propensity to over-identify.
10. GPA will not influence adolescent expression of kindness and the individual subscales of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness). Specifically,
- Adolescents with higher GPAs will not express higher levels of kindness than adolescents with lower GPAs.
 - Adolescents with higher GPAs will not express the lowest level of intentional kindness.
 - Adolescents with higher GPAs will not express the lowest level of random acts of kindness.
 - Adolescents with higher GPAs will not express the lowest level of quiet kindness.
 - Adolescents with higher GPAs will not report higher levels of quiet kindness.
11. GPA will not influence self-compassion and the individual subscales of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, the sense of common humanity, isolation, self-judgment, and the propensity to over-identify). Specifically,
- Adolescents with higher GPAs will not report higher levels of self-compassion.
 - Among the subscales of self-compassion, adolescents with higher GPAs will not report higher levels of self-kindness, mindfulness and the sense of common humanity.
 - Among the subscales of self-compassion, adolescents with higher GPAs will not report lower levels of self-judgment, isolation and the propensity to over-identify.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

An Institutional Review Board approved the project and informed consent to the experiment was obtained for the participants. The sample population of this study consisted of ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students. To make the sample population representative of all teenage students ages 13-18, honors and advanced placement classes received the survey as well as regular level classes. Before the distribution of the online survey on Google Forms, students were made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality and anonymity of their replies, and the approximate time to complete the questionnaire, which was estimated to be ten to fifteen minutes. The survey was scheduled to be given to students at the beginning of the period in social studies and English classes. Participants were told they would receive the time they needed to complete the survey, and once submitted, the anonymity of their responses would be protected by an independent coding system. Students also learned that only group data would be reported. The survey consisted of a social demographics section, an instrument measuring adolescent practice of kindness, and a scale assessing the social and psychological components of self-compassion. One hundred thirteen surveys were distributed and collected.

Instruments

The instrument used in this study, The Adolescent Practice of Kindness Scale (APKS), was developed by the researcher because no measure, which was specifically related to adolescent practice of kindness, was found in the research literature for this demographic group. The vignette items were developed from the review of the literature examining kindness and identification of factors that influence kindness. The twelve vignettes provided hypothetical situations in which adolescents were asked to decide the best course of action that an individual should take when faced with an event that required attention. Possible responses out of four options ranged from indicating a higher expression of kindness, scored 4, to indicating a lower expression of kindness, scored 1. The total range of the twelve-item APKS

is 12 to 48. A score of 12 indicates the lowest expression of kindness among teens; a score of 48 designates the highest expression of kindness among adolescents. The internal consistency of the Adolescent Practice of Kindness Scale (APKS) is .89, reflecting a high level of reliability.

There were three sets of vignettes measuring how adolescents expressed kindness. In the Intentional Acts of Kindness subscale (IAK), a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 12; a score of 4 indicates the lowest expression of kindness when performing intentional acts of kindness, and a score of 12 indicates the highest expression of kindness when performing intentional acts of kindness. In the kindness subscale showing Random Acts of Kindness (RAK), a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 12; a score of 4 indicates the lowest expression of kindness when performing random acts of kindness, and a score of 12 indicates the highest expression of kindness when performing random acts of kindness. In the subscale showing Quiet Acts of Kindness (QAK), a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 12; a score of 4 indicates the lowest expression of kindness when performing quiet acts of kindness, and a score of 12 the highest expression of kindness when performing quiet acts of kindness.

The second scale used in this study was the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2017), which was a 26-item instrument assessing the thoughts, emotions, and actions associated with self-compassion. The Cronbach's alpha for Neff's (2017) Self-Compassion Scale is .92. The Self-Compassion Scale contained items that both demonstrate self-compassion as well as indicate less self-compassion. Among the 5-point Likert Scale ("Almost Never" to "Almost Always"), participants indicated how often they experienced self-compassion. Respondents expressing a high level of self-compassion scored 5, and those reporting low levels of self-compassion scored 1. Items 1, 2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, and 25 were reverse scored. The total of the 26-item Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) ranged from 26 to 130. A score of 26 indicates the lowest level of self-compassion, and the score of 130 indicates the highest level of self-compassion.

Within Neff's (2017) Self-Compassion Scale, there are six subscales: Self-Kindness (SEKIN), Self-Judgment (SEJUD), Common Humanity (COMHUM), Isolation (ISOL), Mindfulness (MINDF), Over-Identification (OVERID). For the general Self-Compassion Scale, the items in the Self-Judgment

subscale, the Isolation subscale, and the Over-Identification subscale were reverse-scored. In the Self-Kindness subscale, a total score of the five items ranges from 5 to 25; a score of 25 indicates a high level of self-kindness, and a score of 5 indicates a low level of self-kindness. In the Self-Judgment subscale, without reverse scoring, a total score of the five items ranges from 5 to 25; a score of 5 indicates a low level of self-judgment, and a score of 25 indicates a high level of self-judgment. In the Common Humanity subscale, a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 20; a score of 4 indicates a low level of common humanity, and a score of 20 indicates a high level of common humanity. In the Isolation subscale, without reverse scoring, a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 20; a score of 4 indicates a low level of isolation, and a score of 20 indicates a high level of isolation. In the Mindfulness subscale, a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 20; a score of 4 indicates a low level of mindfulness, and a score of 20 indicates a high level of mindfulness. In the Over-Identification subscale, without reverse scoring, a total score of the four items ranges from 4 to 20; a score of 4 indicates a low level of over-identification, and a score of 20 indicates a high level of over-identification.

Results

One hundred thirteen adolescents from a public suburban high school participated in this study.

Table 1 shows the distribution of selected demographic variables among the students.

Table 1: Distribution of Selected Demographic Variables Among Students (N = 113)

Variable	Student Frequency	Relative Frequency
Grade:		
9th	28	24.8%
10th	25	22.1%
11th	28	24.8%
12th	32	28.3%
Gender:		
Female	55	48.7%
Male	58	51.3%

GPA:

95-100+	44	38.9%
90-95	32	28.3%
85-90	20	17.7%
80-85	12	10.6%
75-80	2	1.8%
70-75	3	2.7%
65-70	0	0.0%
Less than 65	0	0.0%

Ethnicity:

White (non-Hispanic)/ European American	64	56.6%
Black (non-Hispanic)/ African American	10	8.8%
Asian/Asian American/ Pacific Islander/South Asian	25	22.1%
Hispanic/Latino	14	12.4%

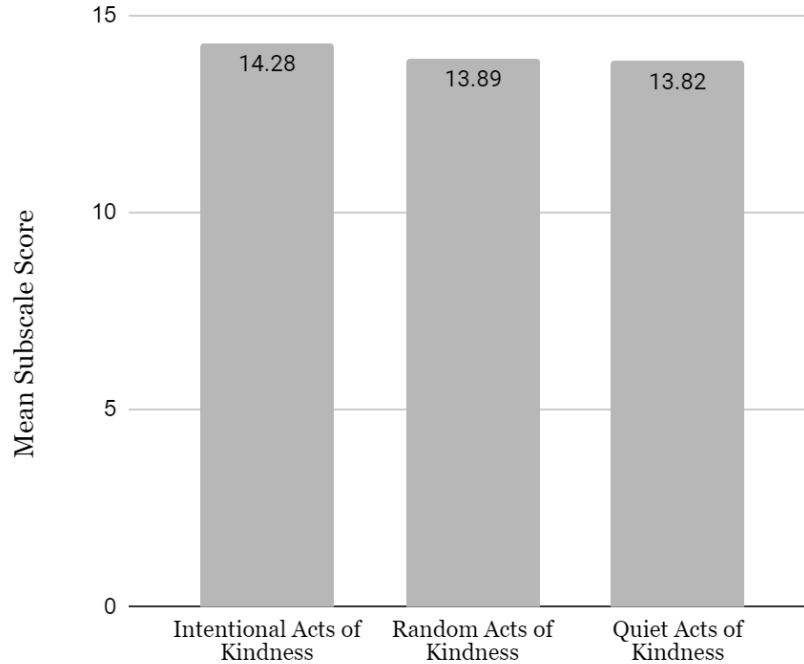
Hypothesis One

Correlation analysis provided support for hypothesis one. Adolescents who expressed higher levels of kindness (M. 42, S.D. 4.79) also reported higher levels of self-compassion (M. 77.47, S.D. 12.84), $r = .28$, $p = .003$.

Hypothesis Two

In hypothesis two, adolescents did express different levels of kindness in the categories of intentional kindness, random acts of kindness, and the practice of quiet kindness. Confirming hypothesis two, adolescents reported the lowest levels of practicing quiet kindness (M. 13.82, S.D. 2.08). Adolescent practice of intentional kindness reported the highest involvement (M. 14.28, S.D. 1.85), and this was followed by adolescent practice of random acts of kindness (M. 13.89, S.D. 1.84). (Graph 1)

Graph 1: Adolescent Practices of Kindness by Category: Intentional Acts of Kindness, Random Acts of Kindness, Quiet Acts of Kindness



Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three predicted that among adolescent expressions of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness), quiet acts of kindness will have the highest correlation with self-compassion. This hypothesis was confirmed. Table 2 shows the correlations of the three adolescent expressions of kindness with self-compassion. Quiet acts of kindness had the strongest correlation, followed by random acts of kindness; intentional acts of kindness had the weakest correlation with self-compassion.

Table 2: Correlations among Adolescent Expressions of Kindness (Intentional Acts of Kindness, Random Acts of Kindness, and Quiet Acts of Kindness) and Self-Compassion

		Intentional Acts of Kindness	Random Acts of Kindness	Quiet Acts of Kindness	Self-Compassion
Intentional Acts of Kindness	Pearson Correlation	1	.42	.59	.08
	Sig.		.000	.000	.41
	N	113	113	113	113
Random Acts of Kindness	Pearson Correlation	.42	1	.58	.24
	Sig.	.000		.000	.01
	N	113	113	113	113
Quiet Acts of Kindness	Pearson Correlation	.59	.58	1	.34
	Sig.	.000	.000		.000
	N	113	113	113	113
Self-Compassion	Pearson Correlation	.08	.24	.34	1
	Sig.	.41	.01	.000	
	N	113	113	113	113

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four predicted the subscales of self-compassion, including self-kindness, mindfulness, and the sense of common humanity, will have a positive and significant correlation to adolescent expression of kindness. Correlation analysis proved hypothesis four correct and significant for the self-compassion subscales of self-kindness and sense of common humanity; the subscale of mindfulness was correct but not significant. The subscale of self-kindness had a positive and significant correlation with adolescent expression of kindness, $r = .29$, $p = .002$. The subscale of a common sense of humanity also had a positive and significant correlation with adolescent expression of kindness, $r = .21$, $p = .03$. Although not significant, mindfulness (M. 12.82, S.D. 3.10) also had a positive correlation.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five predicted the subscales of self-compassion, including self-judgment, isolation, and propensity to over-identify, will have an inverse relationship and fail to show a significant relationship with adolescent expression of kindness. Correlation analysis proved hypothesis five correct

for the self-compassion subscales of self-judgment, isolation, and the propensity to over-identify. The subscale of self-judgment had an inverse and weak relationship with adolescent practice of kindness, $r = -.16$. The subscale of isolation also had a negative and weak correlation with adolescent acts of kindness, $r = -.08$. The propensity to over-identify also reflected a negative and weak correlation with adolescent practice of kindness, $r = -.13$.

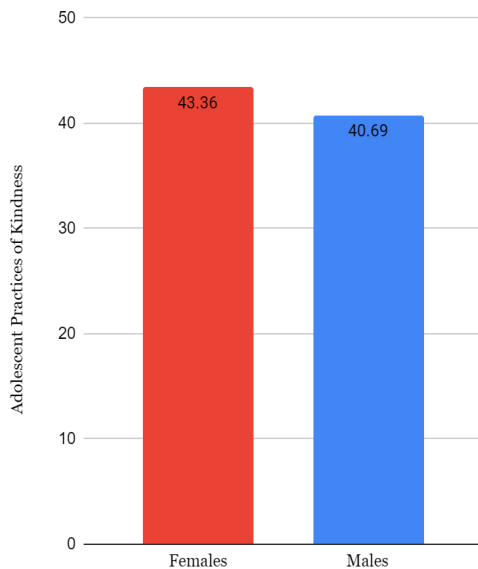
Hypothesis Six

Gender was a significant determinant of adolescent practice of kindness. Independent Sample T-Tests proved hypothesis six correct and significant. Females (M. 43.36, S.D. 3.94) displayed higher levels of kindness than males (M. 40.69, S.D. 5.19), $t(111) = 3.07$, $p = .005$. Hypothesis 6b was also correct and significant. Males (M. 13.79, S.D. 1.98) did report lower levels of intentional kindness when compared to females (M. 14.80, S.D. 1.57), $t(111) = 2.99$, $p = .003$. Independent Sample T-Tests further revealed males (M. 13.50, S.D. 2.04) did report lower levels of random acts of kindness than females (M. 14.29, S.D. 1.52), confirming hypothesis 6c, $t(111) = 2.33$, $p = .022$. Hypothesis 6d was correct and significant, as females (M. 14.27, S.D. 1.81) displayed higher levels of quiet kindness than males (M. 13.40, S.D. 2.23), $t(111) = 2.29$, $p = .024$. (Table 3, Graph 2, Graph 3).

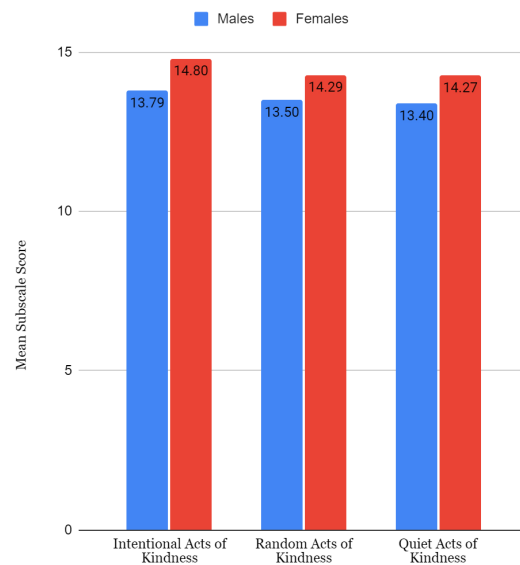
Table 3: Summary of T-Tests Comparing Adolescent Acts of Kindness, Intentional Acts of Kindness, Random Acts of Kindness, and Quiet Acts of Kindness between Genders (N=113)

Variable	t	df	Sig. Level	Mean Difference
Females vs. Males				
Adolescent Acts of Kindness	3.07	111	.003	2.67
Intentional Acts of Kindness	2.99	111	.003	1.00
Random Acts of Kindness	2.33	111	.022	.79
Quiet Acts of Kindness	2.29	111	.024	.88

Graph 2: Gender vs. Mean Practice of Kindness



Graph 3: Gender vs. Mean Subscales of Kindness

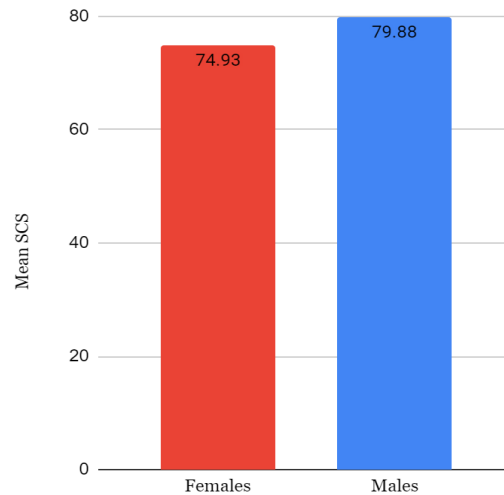


Hypothesis Seven

Gender was a significant determinant of self-compassion, but it was not significant in four of the six subscales of self-compassion. Hypothesis 7a was incorrect but significant, as females (M. 74.94, S.D. 12.62) did not report higher levels of self-compassion than males (M. 79.88, S.D. 12.67), $t(111) = 2.08$, $p = .04$. The higher mean scores of the males showed they, not females, possessed higher levels of self-compassion. (Graph 4). Independent Sample T-Tests proved hypothesis 7b partially correct. While females (M. 15.09, S.D. 3.80) indicated higher levels of self-kindness than males (M. 15.02, S.D. 3.50), males (M. 13.03, S.D. 2.86) reported higher levels of mindfulness when compared to females (M. 12.60, S.D. 3.35). Males (M. 11.98, S.D. 3.48) also reported higher levels of a sense of common humanity than females (M. 11.82, S.D. 3.20). Hypothesis 7c predicted females would report lower levels of self-judgment, isolation, and the propensity to over-identify. This hypothesis was incorrect, as males reported lower levels of self-judgment, isolation, and the propensity to over-identify. Gender was a significant determinant of self-judgment, as females (M. 16.46, S.D. 3.66) reported higher levels than males (M. 15, S.D. 3.25), $t(111) = 2.24$, $p = .027$. Gender was also a significant determinant of propensity to over-identify, as females (M. 13.20, S.D. 3.25) reported higher levels than males (M. 11.45, S.D. 2.86), t

(111) = 3.05, $p = .003$. Although not significant, females (M. 12.93, S.D. 3.96) expressed higher levels of isolation than males (M. 11.71, S.D. 3.24).

Graph 4: Gender vs. Mean Self-Compassion

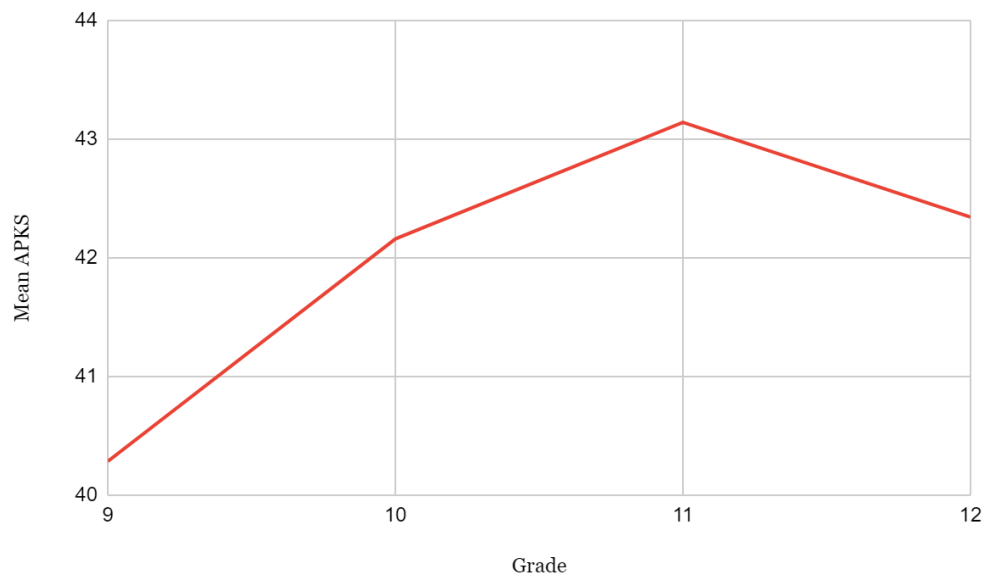


Hypothesis Eight

Hypothesis eight predicted age (school grade) will influence adolescent expressions of kindness and the individual subscales of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness). Older adolescents, specifically in grades 11 and 12, generally expressed the highest level of kindness, supporting hypothesis 8a. Although hypothesis 8a was not significant, increasing grade levels corresponded with increasing levels of kindness, with the exception of grade 11, as adolescents in grade 11 (M. 43.14, S.D. 5.01) reported the highest level of kindness (Graph 5). Adolescents in grade 12 (M. 42.34, S.D. 4.29) reported the second highest level of kindness, and adolescents in grade 10 (M. 42.16, S.D. 4.62) reported the third highest level of kindness and adolescents in grade 9 (M. 40.29, S.D. 5.06) expressed the lowest level of kindness. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses 8b, 8c, and 8d. Although not significant, hypothesis 8b was proven partially correct. Adolescents in grade 10 (M. 14.64, S.D. 1.66) reported the highest level of intentional kindness, and adolescents in grade 11 (M. 14.35, S.D. 1.87) reported the second highest level of intentional kindness. Adolescents in grade 12 (M. 14.47, S.D. 1.76) expressed the third highest level of intentional kindness,

while adolescents in grade 9 (M. 13.68, S.D. 2.06) reported the lowest level of intentional kindness. Hypothesis 8c was supported, but not significant; following the same general pattern as the results of hypothesis 8a. Adolescents in grade 11 (M. 14.54, S.D. 1.75) reported the highest level of random acts of kindness, followed by adolescents in grade 12 (M. 13.94, S.D. 1.92). Adolescents in grade 10 (M. 13.60, S.D. 2.08) expressed the third highest level of random acts of kindness, while adolescents in grade 9 (M. 13.43, S.D. 1.48) reported the lowest level of random acts of kindness. Hypothesis 8d was also supported, but not significant, and followed the pattern established by the results of hypotheses 8a and 8c. Once again, adolescents in grade 11 (M. 14.25, S.D. 1.76) reported the highest level of random acts of kindness, followed by adolescents in grade 12 (M. 13.94, S.D. 1.63). Adolescents in grade 10 (M. 13.92, S.D. 1.93) expressed the third highest level of quiet acts of kindness, while adolescents in grade 9 (M. 13.18, S.D. 2.79) reported the lowest level of quiet acts of kindness.

Graph 5: Grade vs. Mean Practice of Kindness



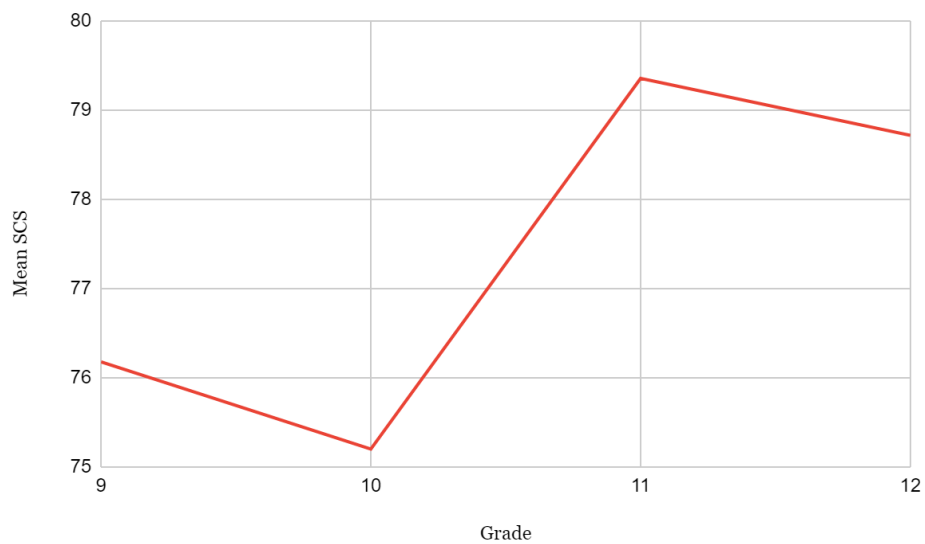
Hypothesis Nine

Hypothesis nine predicted age (school grade) will influence self-compassion and the individual subscales of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, the sense of common humanity, self-judgment,

isolation, and the propensity to over-identify). Although not significant, ANOVA supported hypothesis 9a, as older adolescents generally expressed the highest level of self-compassion. Although grade 11 showed a marked increase from grades 9 and 10, the increase was not consistent, as grade 9 indicated higher levels of self-compassion compared to grade 10. In addition, grade 12 reported lower levels of self-compassion when compared to grade 11. Adolescents in grade 10 (M. 75.20, S.D. 14.26) reported the lowest level of self-compassion (Graph 6). Adolescents in grade 11 (M. 79.36, S.D. 8.01) reported the highest level of self-compassion, and adolescents in grade 12 (M. 78.72, S.D. 14.44) reported the second highest level of self-compassion, and adolescents in grade 9 (M. 76.18, S.D. 13.70) expressed the third highest level of self-compassion. ANOVA was used to test hypotheses 9b and 9c. Although not significant, hypothesis 9b was supported, as older adolescents generally reported the highest levels of self-kindness, mindfulness, and the sense of common humanity (Table 4). Hypothesis 9c, which stated that older adolescents would report lower levels of self-judgment, isolation, and the propensity to over-identify, was partially correct. Adolescents in grade 11 (M. 15.11, S.D. 3.22) reported the lowest level of self-judgment, followed by adolescents in grade 9 (M. 15.25, S.D. 4.11). Adolescents in grade 12 (M. 16.16, S.D. 3.27) reported the third lowest level of self-judgment, and adolescents in grade 10 (M. 16.32, S.D. 3.44) expressed the highest level of self-judgment. Adolescents in grade 9 (M. 11.79, S.D. 3.63) reported the lowest level of isolation, followed by adolescents in grade 11 (M. 12.14, S.D. 3.56). Adolescents in grade 10 (M. 12.40, S.D. 4.00) reported the third lowest level of isolation, and adolescents in grade 12 (M. 12.81, S.D. 3.54) expressed the highest level of isolation. Adolescents in grade 9 (M. 12.64, S.D. 3.15) reported the lowest level of the propensity to over-identify, followed by adolescents in grade 11 (M. 11.79, S.D. 3.01). Adolescents in grade 10 (M. 12.12, S.D. 3.33) reported the third lowest level of the propensity to over-identify, and adolescents in grade 12 (M. 12.59, S.D. 3.26) expressed the highest level of the propensity to over-identify (Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of Mean Subscales of Self-Compassion by Grade (9,10,11,12)

	Grade	Mean	S.D.		Grade	Mean	S.D.
Self-Kindness	9	14.46	4.29	Self-Judgment	9	15.25	4.11
	10	14.28	3.48		10	16.32	3.44
	11	15.29	2.46		11	15.11	3.22
	12	15.97	3.91		12	16.16	3.27
Mindfulness	9	12.21	3.78	Isolation	9	11.79	3.63
	10	12.48	2.92		10	12.40	4.00
	11	12.57	2.04		11	12.14	3.56
	12	13.84	3.24		12	12.81	3.54
Sense of Common Humanity	9	11.18	3.48	Propensity to Over-Identify	9	12.64	3.15
	10	11.28	3.06		10	12.12	3.33
	11	12.54	3.53		11	11.79	3.01
	12	12.47	3.92		12	12.59	3.26

Graph 6: Grade vs Mean Self-Compassion

Hypothesis Ten

GPA was not a significant determinant of adolescent expression of kindness or the individual subscales of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness).

Data analysis proved decreasing GPA did not correlate to adolescent expression of kindness or the individual subscales of kindness (intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness).

Hypothesis Eleven

GPA was not a significant determinant of adolescent level of self-compassion or the individual subscales of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, the sense of common humanity, isolation, self-judgment, and the propensity to over-identify). Decreasing GPA did not correlate to adolescent level of self-compassion or the individual subscales of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, the sense of common humanity, isolation, self-judgment, and the propensity to over-identify).

Discussion

This paper proposed to examine the practice of kindness among high school students. This study examined the practice of three types of kindness among adolescents, specifically: intentional kindness, random acts of kindness and quiet kindness. In addition, the relationship between adolescent self-compassion and the practice of kindness was also investigated. The results of this study have generally clarified the prevalence of acts of kindness and the various forms of kindness among adolescents, as well as the connection between acts of kindness and self-compassion.

Hypothesis one stated that adolescents who express higher levels of kindness will also express higher levels of self-compassion, which was supported by the results of this study. Adolescents who reported high levels of kindness also generally reported high levels of self-compassion. As a significant aspect of self-compassion is being kind to oneself, it was expected that adolescents who are kind to themselves would have a greater propensity to perform kind acts in general. While this correlation was present, adolescents generally expressed extremely high levels of kindness relative to the range (12 to 48) of the Adolescent Practices of Kindness Scale (M. 42, S.D. 4.79). However, adolescents only expressed slightly above average, and not necessarily high, levels of self-compassion based on Neff's (2017)

Self-Compassion Scale, with a mean score of 77.47 (S.D. 12.84), on the scale ranging from 26 to 130. Adolescents often focus heavily on academics, leaving insufficient time and motivation for self-caring and self-compassion.

Acts of kindness can be divided into three categories: intentional acts of kindness, random acts of kindness, and quiet acts of kindness. In support of hypothesis two, adolescents reported the highest levels of intentional kindness, followed by random acts of kindness, and lastly, quiet acts of kindness. Adolescents may have expressed intentional kindness the most because of the emphasis on participation in drives and fundraisers by the school community. In addition, the promotion of prosocial activities, such as intentional acts of kindness, would be helpful for adolescents. During this period in their lives, teens experience the continuous development of their brains, which will be affected by their participation in intentional acts of kindness (Binfet & Whitehead, 2019; Layous et al., 2012). Random acts of kindness are also encouraged in high schools, but to a lesser degree. Poster campaigns and guest speakers are often used to promote the performance of random kind acts in schools. Recognition is typically given to the actor performing an intentional or random act of kindness; this overt recognition also contributes to the prevalence of these categories of kindness. From the perspective of an adolescent, performing kind acts is often done in expectation of receiving recognition in various forms (i.e. receiving awards, earning volunteering hours towards a school requirement). Quiet acts of kindness most likely had the lowest prominence because there is less pressure placed on adolescents to perform them. Adolescents are less inclined to perform quiet acts of kindness because of a lack of recognition; there is no one to give the performer approval for their kind act (Binfet & Enns, 2018). This is unfortunate because quiet acts of kindness are in many ways the most genuine demonstration of kindness. Teens who perform quiet acts of kindness possess an understanding of the recipient's circumstance and needs. This demonstration of kindness is spontaneous, and more often than not, takes place at an optimum time.

In line with hypothesis six, adolescent females reported the highest levels of kindness as well as the individual subscales of kindness. Past studies (Eisenberg et al., 1995) have shown females report higher levels of prosocial behaviors. In addition, the performance of kind acts is more normalized among

females. Male adolescents typically feel less comfortable acting in a kind manner in front of other male adolescents because of an expectation to “be tough.” Adolescent females tend to face expectations of a more kind and caring nature, which may account for higher reported levels of kindness in this study.

Based on the expectation of the anticipated correlation between the performance of acts of kindness and self-compassion, and the expectation that females would report higher levels of kindness, female adolescents were also expected to report higher levels of self-compassion. Past studies (Neff & Germer, 2017; Neff, Whittaker, & Karl, 2017; Yang et al., 2019) on self-compassion have focused on younger children, limiting their accuracy in the prediction of the general relationship between gender and self-compassion among adolescents. Surprisingly, females reported lower levels of self-compassion than males. Adolescents encounter different societal expectations than younger children. Adolescent females face especially intense expectations with regard to body image, as social media has promoted unrealistic expectations in recent years. In addition, bullying has become more prevalent via social media, resulting in further self-esteem concerns. Unfortunately, poor body image and self-esteem among female adolescents have resulted in higher occurrences of eating disorders, among other issues, in recent years as social media use has increased dramatically. These consequences of technology on self-esteem and personal satisfaction among adolescent females may account for the reporting of lower self-compassion when compared to adolescent males.

Age (school grade) was also found to be a determinant of the propensity to perform acts of kindness. As age increased, reported kindness levels generally increased, with the exception of adolescents in grade 11, who reported the highest levels of kindness. As adolescents mature, they generally recognize the importance of being kind to others. In addition, those who have already transitioned into high school typically notice and participate in school-promoted campaigns. Younger adolescents are often also more focused on learning their way around a high school environment than extracurricular activities, such as direct participation (i.e. volunteering) in a club or school-sponsored drive or fundraiser. While the general trend of the results saw older adolescents reporting higher levels of kindness, the specific order of the school grades was unexpected. Adolescents in grade 11 likely reported

the highest levels of kindness because they are acclimated to and comfortable within the high school environment. They are past the stage of adapting to high school in the post-COVID-19 era, but are not yet concerned about the college admissions process.

Age (school grade) was also found to correlate with reported levels of self-compassion, in support of hypothesis nine. Older adolescents generally reported higher levels of self-compassion. Adolescents in grade 10 reported the lowest levels of self-compassion, while adolescents in grade 11 reported the highest levels of self-compassion. Adolescents in grade 10 likely reported the lowest self-compassion levels because they have reached the point where classes become more difficult. While they have fully transitioned into high school, they still lack confidence, in comparison to older adolescents. Grade 9 adolescents are transitioning from being the oldest to the youngest in the school. From that perspective, grade 9 adolescents remain highly self-confident from their time as the oldest students in middle school. Adolescents in grade 11 likely reported the highest self-compassion because they feel more confident in the high school environment once reaching upperclassman status. Grade 12 adolescents reported lower self-compassion levels than those in grade 11, but higher than adolescents in grades 9 and 10. While adolescents in grade 12 also generally experience greater self confidence as upperclassmen, uncertainties and stresses related to the college admissions process likely cause a decrease in self-compassion.

In line with hypotheses ten and eleven, GPA was not a significant predictor of the propensity to perform kind acts or self-compassion. While these findings were expected, a small sample of adolescents with lower GPAs (C, D+, D) limits the generalizability of these results. Although adolescents with lower GPAs often are seen as less responsible, there is no evidence to indicate that there should be any expectation of level of kindness or self-compassion based on this factor alone. GPA is a measure of academic success. While those who are academically successful tend to be responsible, adolescents who struggle with academics are not necessarily irresponsible and would not necessarily lack self-compassion or a propensity to be kind.

This study has the potential to promote the performance of acts of kindness in schools, particularly in a high school environment. The current generation of high schoolers, Generation Z, is

known for being typically egocentric and overconfident. They generally focus more on themselves and do not leave enough time to act kind to others. Schools tend to notice this lack of kindness and sponsor intentional acts of kindness, such as food or blood drives. In elementary, middle, and to a lesser extent, high schools, random acts of kindness are often promoted through assemblies and poster campaigns. It is important to continue to support the efforts of schools in promoting intentional acts of kindness and random acts of kindness because these programs provide students with an opportunity to perform kind acts. It is also probable school-sponsored acts of kindness will shape the future behavior and values of students who not only perform acts of kindness, but also value the practice of being kind to others.

The expression of genuine kindness, not influenced by outside motives or inspirations, is most reflected through quiet acts of kindness. Because quiet acts of kindness do not share the public forum of intentional acts of kindness and random acts of kindness, it is possible that students are unaware of what quiet acts of kindness are and how magnanimous and altruistic quiet acts of kindness can be. Future studies need to address not only adolescent practices of kindness, but also examine the potential importance of acknowledging and practicing quiet acts of kindness. Schools and communities will reap a bountiful harvest of social cohesion, and in this environment, students will feel a sense of belonging and value.

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