**IRB Scenario Group Activity**

***Bad Mary***

Mary Smith is a professor at the University of Unknown and has decided she’d like to conduct a study involving children (ages 8 to 15), and how they feel about divorcing and divorced parents.

Mary knows the University of Unknown has an IRB because she’s heard her colleagues talk about this committee. Some of the reviews were bad, most were great, but she is aware of the IRB and knows what they do. She and some of her colleagues have even talked about how bothersome it is to have to wait for this board to give approval to their study, especially when they, the researchers, were the **best** judges at determining how *their* research should be conducted.

Mary has heard about studies involving interviews that were approved as Exempt and feels her study is at this level as well since she won’t be using identifiers such as names nor addresses. And since she made that determination, she can go ahead and start. You see, Mary is in a hurry to start the study because the university will be closed for the holidays, she has vacation plans, and she promised her author friend at This is Us, a research publication on ‘real life’ issues, that she’d have a story before she left the country.

Geared with her questions, a notepad, a camera and a tape recorder, Mary heads out to the mall to start her interviews. She plans to be at the mall for a couple of hours, and then she’ll head over to the local elementary school where her boyfriend is a teacher and has given her the ok to come to the school to ask her questions in his class.

Trolling the food court, Mary approaches groups of children, asking how old they are, and stating she will give $10 to any child who answers her questions. She tells them it’s ok to do so and their parents wouldn’t mind because the kids are safe in the mall and they are in group with their friends. As kids start volunteering to answer Mary’s questions, she starts the interviews within the groups. Mary will be audiotaping the children so she can accurately transcribe the interviews, and she’ll be taking pictures as well, since her study is a photo-novella.

Mary’s questions are: 1) Are your parents divorcing, 2) Do you know why they are divorcing, 3) Do you think you are the cause of their divorce, 4) Do you know if either of your parents had a lover/partner on the side before that is contributing to the divorce, 5) Are your parents physically fighting during the divorce, 6) Have your parents intentionally hurt each other, or you, during the divorce, 7) When your parents were finally divorced, did they want to see you, or do you think they were mad at you for causing the divorce, 8) Did your parents talk bad about each other and if so, what did they say, 9) Did your parents tell you bad things about the other parent, 10) Did your parents tell you that you would never see the other parent again, 11) Did/do you feel like hurting yourself because of the divorce, 12) Have you hurt yourself because of the divorce, 13) Did/do you do drugs or drink to help you cope with the stress of your parents’ divorce, 14) Are there siblings in the house, 15) How do you think they (your siblings) feel.

Mary also informed the children that if they had siblings under 15 they could recruit to be in her study, she would pay them an additional $20. All they had to do was meet her in the mall next week.

By the time Mary has finished asking her questions, several of the children were visibly upset and crying, and of the 30 something children who “participated” in Mary’s study, she only paid 12 because the rest didn’t (or couldn’t) answer all 15 of her questions. There were a couple of adults who stopped to ask if the children were okay, and if “this woman” was bothering them. Mary assured them she was a professor at the university and was conducting an Exempt study on behalf of the university. She even gave some adults her business cards to prove her credentials.

Done with her study at the mall, Mary headed out to the school to see if she could get better results. She called her boyfriend who informed her it was good timing as the children were at lunch and would be going out for recess soon and Mary could conduct her study on the playground. He said this would allow them to bypass having to get the school’s approval to conduct her research inside the classroom. Mary couldn’t believe her luck.