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# THE CADRE

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## STUDY BY UPEI PROF ATTRACTS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

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Contributor

What started out as a small classroom research project has turned into something big for UPEI Psychology professor Stacey Nairn. A study conducted two years ago as part of her Experimental Social Psychology class has recently received international attention, as a proposed new television show is planning on including her research findings in its programming.

The original study examined people's differing perceptions of revenge-seeking behaviour among males and females. Nairn arrived at the interesting finding that women who take revenge as perceived much more negatively than men who do the same, but only when being evaluated by men. She sums up the finding as representing men's stereotype that "nice girls don't." Or shouldn't, at least, as we seem to see it in our culture.

This striking sex difference in perception has attracted the attention of the BBC, who have plans in the works for a new television show dealing with women's issues, which will discuss the implications of this finding, among other things.

One of the major, and most obvious implications, is that when men, as a third party, view (or even become aware of it indirectly) a woman committing revenge-seeking behaviour, they will typically view that



Photo: Amazon Images

### *Revenge is Sweet*

woman's actions as significantly more negative than they would the same action carried out by a man, says Nairn. Unfortunately, men are going to see an act of retaliation as more negative when it is committed by a female.

The proposed BBC program isn't the only medium through which these findings will reach a larger audience. A recently published Claire Gillman book, entitled *Revenge is Sweet*, uses Nairn's research as an empirical basis for much of its anecdotal content. Nairn is excited about the flurry of attention the research has gotten.

"One of the things I find so fabulous about this is that research which began in a classroom, in a small university in Prince Edward Island, has grown exponentially. It really speaks volumes about what we're capable of at this school," Nairn laughs. "It's been presented at national and international conferences, it's been included in a published book, it's going to be on a TV show, and I'm only now



finishing writing the manuscript for publication in an academic journal."

Nairn is also proud that this widespread attention should boost the interest in the social psychology program, which includes an ongoing research program both in Nairn's lab and in her Experimental Social Psychology class. This year's group is exploring new directions in research on

revenge, including the way that attractiveness as well as the length of time between a transgression and subsequent revenge affect our perceptions of the action. Additionally, Nairn is waiting on a large SSHRC grant, which would generate even more opportunities within the field of revenge research.

It's an exciting time to be a social psych student!

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