ABSTRACT

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Title: REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA IN COLLEGE STUDENTS:
                      AN INDIRECT-CONTACT
                      INTERVENTION

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Mental illness is a common stigmatized condition (Stout, Villegas, & Jennings, 2004), and many people suffering from mental illnesses experience shame, exclusion, and negativity in response to their diagnosis (Thornicraft, Mehta, Clement, Evans-Lacko, Doherty, Rose, Koschorke, Shidhaye, O'Reilly, & Henderson, 2016). Previous, but limited, research shows that indirect-contact intervention can help to reduce mental health stigma; therefore, I looked at the effectiveness of an indirect-contact intervention on reducing mental health stigma in college students. Participants were PSY 100 students ($n = 84$) from Southern CT State University. Approximately two to four days after completing pre-test measures, participants watched one of two videos to which they were randomly assigned (i.e., the experimental or control video). They then filled out post-test measures. I used an independent samples t-test to compare pre- and post-test scores. Results indicated that the average change scores for those who watched the stigma video ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 6.27$) were statistically significantly higher than for those who watched the climate change video ($M = -0.33$, $SD = 2.98$), $t(62.75) = 2.07$, $p = .04$. The effect size (eta-squared = .05) indicated a moderate effect. These results indicated that the indirect-contact intervention (i.e., watching a video portraying the truths about mental illness) used in this research study was effective in reducing mental health stigma in college students. Limitations and future research directions are discussed.