

CAN YOU BE VACCINATED FROM TEASING?
A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF TEASING HISTORY AND
CURRENT SELF ESTEEM LEVELS

A Dissertation

by

JOHN MICHAEL HERSHBERGER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2011

Major Subject: Counseling Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Can You be Vaccinated from Teasing?

A Retrospective Study of Teasing History and Current Self Esteem Levels.

(December 2011)

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Teasing is prevalent throughout the lives of most individuals beginning in childhood. Teasing can be a positive “pro-social” interaction, or a negative “anti-social” experience. Childhood teasing on the “anti-social” level has been shown to have detrimental effects on an individual’s self-esteem and has been linked to increased psychological distress in adulthood.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of an individual’s environment, as defined by his or her teasing history with their peers and families, at different stages during their development on their level of self-esteem. Two hundred and three adult participants completed a questionnaire packet designed to measure teasing history, self-esteem, and perceived social support from family and peers.

Results indicated that negative teasing interactions were related to lower reported levels of self-esteem. Negative teasing from one’s family during elementary school and negative teasing from one’s peers during middle school were found to have the greatest

influence on current self-esteem levels. Results also showed that early and concurrent exposure to teasing at the pro-social level during elementary school could negate the later influence future anti-social teasing might have on one's self esteem level. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are presented.

DEDICATION

Thank you for always supporting me, believing in me, and driving me to be a better person. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Marilyn, Mom, Dad, and Anna.

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I would like to thank my advisor, Collie Conoley, for his amazing support and guidance throughout my doctoral studies. You have helped shape me as a student, counselor, researcher, and eventual colleague. A very special thanks must be given to Linda Castillo for taking me under her wing when my chair had to relocate to sunny California. Thank you both for not giving up on me and pushing me to get this finished. I would also like to thank Daniel Brossart for his patience in waiting for me to complete my dissertation, and Victor Willson for his flexibility. You all have made this goal of graduation a possibility.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teasing is pervasive throughout the lives of most individuals starting in childhood and continuing through adulthood transcending gender, culture, and socio-economic status level. It is such a common method of interaction between individuals that almost everyone has experienced it at one point or another, and it is often considered merely part of growing up. A study by Mooney, Cresser, and Blatchford (1991) found that 96% of children 7 and 11 years old reported that teasing occurred in their school.

The word “tease” has its roots in the Anglo-Saxon word “taesan”, which means to tear to pieces, and the French word “attiser”, meaning “to feed a fire with fuel” (Pawluk, 1989, p. 146). The Oxford Dictionaries Online (2010) defines tease as to “make fun of or attempt to provoke (a person or animal) in a playful way.” Shapiro, Baumeister and Kessler (1991), defined teasing as a very complex interaction, primarily because it contains three key elements in its message: aggression, humor, and ambiguity. Keltner, Caps, Kring, Young, and Heerey (2001) found via their analysis of several studies on teasing that “Teasing” is actually defined in numerous ways by different people. The intention of the tease may be either playful or hurtful in nature.

The ambiguous nature of teasing exists because of the inherent disparity between the aggressive and humorous qualities of teasing statements. Much like humor, teasing is

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*.

dependent upon the combination of mixed messages and metaphors (Hoover & Olson, 2000). It is also a function of the discrepancy that typically exists between the teaser's literal meaning and the interpretation of the target being teased (Shapiro et al., 1991). When the target is unable to decipher the intent of the teaser, then he or she must infer a perceived intention. Shapiro et al. (1991) noted: "Teasing presents an interesting instance of the uses of dangers of ambiguity in interpersonal communication. It is capable of eliciting a range of affective reactions from laughter to tears and behavioral responses from joking to physical assault" (p. 471). This perception is typically based on an individual's previous experiences, rather than the actual context of the current teasing situation (Barnett, Burns, Sanborn, Bartel, & Wilds, 2004). The target of the tease also uses the teaser's nonverbal context clues, such as his or her facial expression and body language as well as the tone or manner in which the tease was delivered (Keltner et al., 2001). The ambiguousness, which is inherent in the teasing interaction, may be a key factor that creates potential emotional trauma.

Despite the typical negative connotation that is associated with teasing, it is not always a negative experience. It can be used to socialize, build relationships, flirt, resolve conflicts, or merely as a playful interaction between friends (Barnett et al., 2004; Keltner, et al., 2001). This type of teasing is typically referred to as Pro-Social teasing, and it is actually reported to be more common than the negative type of teasing (Barnett, et al, 2004). During a pro-social teasing interaction both the target and the teaser are able to laugh about the teasing statement. Specifically, pro-social teasing can facilitate the creation or maintenance of interpersonal relationships as well as enhance existing

relationships. Furthermore, it may also serve as a means to resolve conflicts within personal relationships (Barnett, et al., 2004).

Although the pro-social form of teasing may be more common, the more negatively toned types of teasing have generated more interest. Negative, commonly referred to as Anti-Social teasing, may result in such consequences as embarrassment, harassment, humiliation, and/or alienation of the object of the tease (Mooney et al., 1991). The primary reason an individual is teased is that they are observed to be different from others. Individuals who look physically different or have distinctive voices make very easy targets. A majority of the types of teases reported by victims of teasing focused on physical appearance, followed by relationships and behavior (Kowalski, 2000). Research has shown that individuals often tease others when they have violated social norms (Keltner et al., 2001). Teasing those who deviate from the norm may be either an attempt to force them to conform to the group, or to ostracize them for their differences.

While nearly every person has at least witnessed a teasing event, a vast majority of individuals have been victims of teasing directly. Mooney et al. (1991) found that 67% and 66% of the 7 and 11 year olds, respectively, reported that they themselves had been victims of teasing. In a similar investigation Fontana (1999) revealed that as many as 75% of students reported being victimized by teasing. Shapiro et al. (1991) reported a very striking finding about teasing in that when high school students were asked to name their main fears, the fear named most often was that of being teased.

Although a majority of teasing research is based on peer interaction, a significant amount of teasing takes place in the home, particularly between siblings (Gerrald, 1991). An investigation of retrospective teasing from peers and family members by Cash (1995) yielded that peers were responsible for 62% of reported teasing incidents, while family members were implicated for 35%. Despite the majority of teasing incidents being reported as coming from peers, incidents initiated by family members were reported as being the “worst” or most destructive (Cash, 1995).

Teasing events can be very powerful memories in an individual’s life, and many report certain teasing incidents as ones they will never forget (Kowalski, 2000). Teasing can have adverse effects on individuals while they are growing up. Having a history of teasing has been associated with reported feelings of shame, being unattractive, loneliness and abandonment at school, and individuals may not feel as if they have a single good friend (Fontana, 1999; Kowalski, Howerton, & McKenzie, 2001; Kowalski, 2000). It has been reported that 20% of self-reported victims of bullying/teasing scored within the clinical range of depression and anxiety (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Women have often attributed teasing as being the primary cause of developing dissatisfaction with their body image and the subsequent development of eating disorders (Cattarin & Thompson, 1994; Shapiro, et al., 1991; Thompson, Cattarin, Fowler, & Fisher, 1995).

Research has shown that a history of teasing has often been associated with lower levels of self-esteem (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Gleason, Alexander, & Somers, 2000; Kowalski, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2001). Self-esteem is thought of as the self-evaluation made by each individual, and as the general attitude a person holds about

himself or herself (Baron, Byne, & Watson, 2001). It is believed to be one of the key factors affecting psychological well-being and social functioning. A healthy self-esteem is manifested in the overall acceptance of oneself as a person and in feelings of worthiness and self-confidence, subsequently resulting in healthy functioning and general well-being (Gleason et al., 2000; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999). Teasing almost always focuses on the attributes of a person, portraying them in a negative fashion. This negative evaluation would likely have an effect on how one ultimately feels about him or herself, leading to decreased levels of self-esteem.

Past research has shown that one of the main influences on self-esteem is a person's environment while growing up (Burt, Cohen, & Bjorck, 1988; Oliver, & Paull, 1995). The quality of interpersonal relationships in the family and with peers is related to the child's level of self-esteem (Galvinhill, 2001; Kirk, 2002). Way and Robinson (2003) investigated the influences of family and friends on psychological adjustment and reported that higher levels of perceived support from both the family and friends resulted in significantly higher levels of self-esteem when compared to those with low perceived levels of family and friends support.

Oliver, and Paull (1995) reported that people who expressed feeling high levels of acceptance from their parents while growing up as well as a sense of family cohesion had significantly higher levels of self-esteem compared to those who did not. Similarly, children who are highly accepted and regarded by their peers also showed higher levels of self-esteem (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). On the contrary, individuals who

reported feeling high levels of parental control had significantly lower levels of self-esteem (Oliver, Paull, 1995). Having a family and friends reported as being helpful, supportive, and encouraging of self-expression are also positively correlated with self-esteem; conversely, families with frequent open anger and aggression with them has been demonstrated to be significantly and negatively related to self-esteem (Burt et al., 1988; Kirk, 2002).

There has been some research showing that a positive environment in one area (family or peer) would be able to cancel out the adverse effects of a negative environment in the other area. It was found that school aged children of low-warmth mothers who were accepted by their peers had fewer behavior problems than did the children who were rejected (Patterson, Cohn, & Kao, 1989). Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, and Lapp (2002) found that peer acceptance appeared to moderate the impact of having high levels of family adversity.

Statement of the Problem

Teasing is certainly an issue that impacts the lives of all individuals. Although there are certain individuals who may be more prone to be teased, nobody is immune from the experience. The effects can be extremely detrimental to one's sense of self worth, social development, and psychological well-being. However, teasing is not intrinsically malice in nature, but rather ambiguous by definition. It is the interpretation of this ambiguity that colors the target's experience as either pro-social or anti-social. Currently there is very little research that addresses the interpretation of teasing events

due to this ambiguity. It is this area that may hold a key to reducing the damaging effects of teasing.

Research has shown that when individuals respond to teasing by a humorous response it decreases the negative feelings towards them and the potential for future teasing (Evans, 2002; Landau, Milich, Harris, & Larson, 2001; Lightner, Bollmer, Harris, Milich, & Scambler, 2000; Scambler, Harris, & Milich, 1998). If individuals are able to interpret teasing as pro-social, they may be more inclined to respond in a more favorable manner, be less likely to perceive themselves as a victim, and have less negative effects towards their self esteem.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of an individual's environment, as defined by his or her teasing history with their peers and families, at different stages during their development on their level of self-esteem. This study is significant because it examines relatively unexplored areas of teasing, a ubiquitous event in the lives of most people during childhood. The negative effects of teasing are not limited to the age in which they occurred, but rather, can continue throughout adult life. Ideally, results of this research can be used to help to determine where the most effective place to intervene would be, with family and/or friends and at what time.

Research Questions

The current study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What relationship exists between the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence with college self-esteem levels?
2. Which teasing source influences a college student's current level of self-esteem the most?
3. When is teasing from one's family or peers most influential on their college level self-esteem?
4. Which source of teasing was rated highest/lowest in negativity?
5. Will individuals who recall being initially exposed to pro-social teasing be less negatively affected by anti-social teasing (i.e. have higher levels of reported self-esteem) when they experience anti-social teasing later in life than those who were not initially exposed to pro-social teasing and later experience anti-social teasing?
6. Can a pro-social teasing environment in one area of a child's social life (e.g friends or family) counterbalance the effects of an anti-social teasing environment in a different aspect of their social lives (e.g family or friends) if they are experiencing them at the same time?
7. Will social support from family and peers have similar relationships to the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence as college self-esteem levels?

It is hypothesized that there will be a negative relationship between a subject's teasing history and their current level of self-esteem, indicating greater amounts of anti-social teasing would account for lower levels of reported self-esteem. Past research has shown that family teasing would be more impactful at earlier stages (during elementary school) and peer teasing would be most influential later in life (during high school). It is also hypothesized that subjects with a history of pro-social teasing from both sources (family and peers) will have higher levels of self-esteem than either singularly. Conversely, a history of anti-social teasing from both family and peers will result in lower levels of self-esteem than either singularly. Another hypothesis of this study is that individuals with a history of pro-social teasing from their family and anti-social teasing from their peers, or vice-versa, will not have as low a level of self-esteem as those participants who experienced anti-social teasing from both their family and peers or as high a level of self-esteem as participants with a history of pro-social teasing in both areas. This hypothesis suggests that either pro-social teasing from the family or peers would help offset the adverse effects of the opposing anti-social teasing from the other group. And finally, it is hypothesized that anti-social teasing at earlier stages of childhood from their peers, family, or both would have a more detrimental effect on an individual's level of self-esteem than a anti-social teasing at a later stage in childhood. Due to the high correlation between reported self-esteem levels and social support from both family and peers, it is hypothesized that the relationship between family teasing and perceived family support and peer teasing and perceived peer support would be similar to that of teasing history and reported self-esteem levels.

The goal of this study was to determine if it is possible for children to be 'Vaccinated for Teasing'. This study sought to examine if the interpretation of teasing events is influenced by a child's previous teasing experiences, which would cause them to view it in either a pro-social or anti-social way. The study also looked to examine if the teasing by family members or peers would play a more significant role in how a child interpreted teasing events at different time periods while growing up.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most people, if not every person has experienced teasing in their lifetime. Despite the act of teasing being easy to identify, it is ironically one of the most complicated to define. The primary reason is that the intent of the act itself can range from playful banter to aggressive bullying. Teasing, like humor, is dependent upon the combination of mixed messages and metaphors (Hoover & Olson, 2000).

Defining Teasing

Eder (1991) and Kowalski (2000) discuss the concept of teasing as being constructed of a series of interactions and not something that is easily defined objectively. The ambiguous nature of a teasing interaction allows each participant the opportunity to exert influence on the path the interaction follows and lands on the continuum. Meaning for that particular interaction is developed and attributed by the participants based on their own subjective experience, interpretation of the tease, and relational history – and in general, it's often left to the target of the tease to interpret for her or himself. This creates an atmosphere in which the motivation for any act of teasing is difficult to discern for the victim, and easily rationalized by the perpetrator (should his or her motivation come into question).

Shapiro et al., (1991) defined teasing as “a personal communication, directed by an agent towards a target that includes three components: aggression, humor, and ambiguity,” (p. 460). This broad definition encompasses the variability and range of possibilities within any given teasing interaction, while Voss (1997) defined teasing as

“humorous taunts” (p. 241), adding that: “Categorizing an episode of teasing is difficult because humor is situated and contextual; not only does it require firsthand knowledge of the situation on the part of the researcher, but it also depends on the situated understanding of the participants.” (p. 242). This definition assumes that teasing is generally always meant to be humorous, at the very least for the one doing the teasing. Warm (1997) assumes a darker intent, defining teasing as “a deliberate act designed by the teaser to cause tension in the victim, such as anxiety, frustration, anger, embarrassment, humiliation, etc., and it is presented in such a way that the victims can escape if they ‘catch on’,” (p. 98). Again, the perpetrator is also granted an “escape” of sorts, whereby he or she can claim to have been “just playing around”.

These definitions (Shapiro et al., 1991; Voss, 1997; Warm, 1997) emphasize the role of humor in making teasing a playful experience and providing victims with some potential to escape if they can understand the context in which the teasing is presented, but they also acknowledge the potential for misinterpretations or unappreciated humor that contribute to negative teasing experiences. This conceptualization differs somewhat from the conceptualizations of teasing provided by Gerrard (1991), Martlew and Hodson (1991), Roberts, Walter, and Coursol (1996), and Vernberg, Ewell, Beery, Freeman, and Abwender, (1995), that emphasized the aggressive component of teasing above all.

A conceptual and empirical review of existing teasing literature yielded this definition from Keltner et al., (2001): “intentional provocation accompanied by playful off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target,” (p. 234). The “off-record markers” are teasing components that account for the ambiguity and

humor in the teasing interaction. It is the target's interpretation of these markers that greatly influence if they will classify the teasing experience as either friendly (pro-social) or hostile (anti-social) teasing. According to Keltner et al., (2001) a provocation cannot be considered a tease if the off-record markers are absent.

A definition of teasing that is inclusive of all the aforementioned characteristics may be nearly impossible to formulate. The concept of teasing may be better described as existing on a continuum. One end of the continuum may overlap with bullying and include such activities as verbal aggression, threats, and physical attacks, while the other end of the continuum would represent benign, playful teasing that includes activities such as parent-child peek-a-boo games and flirting behaviors. In other words, classification of teasing interactions cannot be accomplished objectively. The subjective experiences of the participants play an important role in defining the event. Therefore placement of the teasing exchange along the hostile-playful continuum may depend greatly on the subjective interpretations of those involved.

Functions of Teasing

Boxer and Contes-Conde (1997) reported that teasing can be used as a way of enhancing relationships among peers. Those intimately acquainted can use this method to cajole one another using humor and in effect ease any doubts about one's own flaws. Teasing thus plays a bonding role among intimate friends. Among less intimate friends, teasing oneself, as through self-effacing joking, can serve the purpose of demonstrating one's own approachability and can thus promote the creation of new friendships and bonding (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997). Those not intimately acquainted may bridge the

discomfort and pressure of getting to know one another using this method. Additionally, other research has found that teasing is more likely among friends and close relationships, once more suggesting that teasing can be a positive and, perhaps, even an intimate interaction (Baxter, 1992).

Although teasing can be viewed as aggressive or even hostile, it can also create bonds and be in the “spirit of good fun” (Endo, p. 113, 2007). In further support of a somewhat positive role for the act of teasing, Eder (1991) also reported that teasing allowed adolescents to convey social norms indirectly without directly accusing someone of a norm violation. This indicates the teasing may be meant as a signal of sorts, to those perceived to be out of place among his/her peers – which is not an altogether negative motivation. Surprisingly, teasing about negative attributes also appears to increase liking among participants. In one of the first experimental studies to investigate teasing in a laboratory setting, participants’ perceptions of their perpetrators were actually more favorable than their perceptions of other individuals after experiencing the receiving end of teasing attacks, the content of which included negative personality traits, unpleasant appearance, and sexual abnormalities (Keltner, Young, Heerey, and Oemig, 1998).

Teasing has been considered to have several more pro-social functions (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997; Eder, 1991; Keltner, et al., 1998; Warm, 1997). Warm (1997) suggested that teasing can be an effective way for adults to teach young children about the world. Eder (1991) investigated teasing behaviors that she termed “playful teasing” and noted the positive social effects of these interactions. Eder (1991) investigated

teasing among 10-to-14 year-olds over a 3-year period. From the results of this naturalistic observation study, Eder concluded that teasing serves several pro-social functions for this age group. For instance, teasing allowed adolescents to convey liking for others indirectly by directing attention toward them. As with any spectrum of behavior, a negative aspect of teasing also exists.

Teasing also promotes social conformity (Kowalski, 2003; Shapiro et al., 1991). Prime examples occur in high school when individual characteristics are highlighted and ridiculed because they do not fall into the “in-group” or popular crowd. Naturally this is a negative form of influence, whereby social dominance can be established, and power and control exerted through teasing (Kowalski, 2003; Shapiro et al., 1991). Because this form of teasing is specifically geared to be observed by the perpetrator’s peers, as a way of establishing his/herself as “one of the crowd”, it may not always reflect his/her actual thoughts. When teasing, people can choose to disguise their true feelings and intention, another form of identity regulation (Shapiro et al., 1991). However, literature has shown that the functions of teasing change throughout development (Keltner et al., 2001; Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski et al., 2001; Mills, 2001).

Targets of Teasing

The targets of teasing are often times those who are perceived to be different (Sweeting & West, 2001). These differences may be in appearance, race, disability such as sight, hearing or speech, school performance, family characteristics, and SES (Landau, Milich, Harris, and Larson, 2001; Sweeting & West, 2001), but teasing about bodily appearance, weight, and weight-related issues are some of the most common

forms of teasing (Eder, 1991; Warm, 1997), physical appearance being the most readily available resource.

Bollmer, Harris, Milich, and Georgesen (2003) investigated the differences among perceptions between victims and perpetrators. Results of this study found that victims of frequent teasing tend to be self-focused in their assessment of the interaction. Trying to reflect on how they contributed or why they deserved to be teased. Frequent victims of teasing were rated as less friendly and as having poor social skills. Bollmer et al., (2003) offered the explanation that frequent victims may be more guarded and hesitant when entering social relationships, which perpetuates the cycle strained relationships. Hodges and Perry (1999) further note that these distressed reactions by victims can signal that they are unable to effectively defend themselves, thus making them more prone to be targeted for future attacks.

Kowalski (2000) had participants write two narrative accounts of their experiences with teasing – one story as a victim and one as perpetrator. Consistent with previous research, the content of teasing was shown to predominantly focus on physical appearance and body parts. Targets of teasing displayed an ambiguous understanding of the perpetrator's motives behind the teasing interactions. Perceptions of teasing by targets were generally more negative than those by perpetrators. Victims expressed annoyance and perceived themselves to be viewed less favorably by their teasers. Victims also subsequently experienced a decline in their self-esteem. Alternatively, perpetrators perceived such teasing interactions as humorous; however, many acknowledged feelings of guilt regarding their actions (Kowalski, 2000). Despite this

guilt, reactions elicited from their victims generate an attractive sense of control. A study by Perry, Williard, and Perry, (1990) suggest that signs of distress, anxiousness, sadness, and withdrawal all serve as tangible rewards for aggressive children to tease. Such reactions from victims of teasing only reinforce the behavior of the perpetrators.

For both men and women in the Schwartz, Phares, Tattleff-Dunn, and Thompson, (1999) study parent teasing frequency was also correlated with overall psychological distress, with correlations of .34 and .32, respectively ($p < .001$); however, results also showed men as less sensitive to teasing when compared to women. Gleason et al., (2000) propose that men and women should be considered separately due to the difference in topic/domain/forms of teasing and degree of sensitivity.

Harmful Consequences of Teasing

The following section reviews this body of literature and examines the more negative and injurious aspects of the issue. Much of the relevant literature considers teasing and name calling to exist within the broader context of bullying and peer aggression (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Boulton, 1995; Boulton, & Underwood, 1992; Lightner et al., 2000; Terav & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 1998; Whitney & Smith, 1993). From a teased child's perspective, teasing and bullying can be the most pressing problems associated with attending school (Karcher, 1997). Children are essentially thrown together and exposed to one another on a consistent basis, under limited supervision. This allows for plenty of exposure to teasing from peers during the school day.

Targets of teasing tend to have poor social skills, negative self-image, lack of confidence in their situation, and often feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive (Olweus, 1991; Fontana, 1999). Crozier and Skliopidou, (2002) reported that name-calling, a relatively unexamined form of teasing, has also been shown to have long-term effects on individuals. Their study asked adult participants to recall their experiences of being called names while at school. Most indicated that the experiences were negative, eliciting feelings of anger, unhappiness, shame, and embarrassment at the time. Participants who were categorized as “most hurt” by the effects of name-calling, rated their current emotions regarding the experience as more negative and as having had greater long-term effects on personality and attitudes. Of the 220 participants, 52 reported that name-calling was still a painful experience for them (Crozier & Skliopidou, 2002).

Teasing has not only been found to adversely impact an individual’s emotional state, but their scholastic development as well. Teasing victimization has been associated with several academic struggles including: lower academic achievement, skipping classes, smoking, and alcohol use (Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, and Kardeliene, 2008). One study conducted by Johnston, O’Malley, and Bachman, (1993) found that 90% of students who reported being teased and/or bullied also reported a drop in their grades.

Victims of teasing have also reported significant issues with body image as a result of being teased. Lunner, Werthem, Thompson, Paxton, McDonald, and Halvaarson, (2000) reported evidence that teasing partially mediates the relationship

between BMI and eating restraint. Schwartz et al., (1999) found a statistically significant correlation ($-0.35, p < .001$) between body satisfaction and the frequency of teasing women received from their parents. This leads to the potentially long-term negative consequence of the development of body image disturbances and eating disorders (Lunner et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 1995; Thompson, Fabian, Moulton, Dunn, and Altabe., 1991).

The relationship between childhood teasing and lower self-esteem during adulthood was examined by Gleason et al., (2000). The study explored the influence of three domains of childhood teasing (competency, weight, appearance) on later self-esteem for males and females. This study used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), the Perception of Teasing Scale (POTS), and the Physical Appearance Related Teasing Scale (PARTS) with undergraduate students. Gleason et al., (2000) noted the importance of understanding this relationship as high self-esteem is associated with healthy functioning (ex. academic achievement, general well-being). Results indicated that chronic teasing, particularly about appearance, was related to lower levels of self-esteem later in life.

Recent studies have exhibited a relationship between negative experiences of childhood and adolescent teasing and higher rates of anxiety and depression (Roth, Coles, and Heimberg, 2002; Storch, Bravata, Storch, Johnson, Roth, & Roberti, 2003; Storch, Roth, Coles, Heimberg, Bravata, & Moser, 2004), lower self-esteem, and devalued interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Gleason et al., 2000; Kowalski, 2000, 2003). Roth et al. (2002) illustrated the relationship between childhood teasing and the

experience of depression and anxiety in adulthood. The study involved undergraduate college students completing self-report instruments measuring teasing history, and depression and anxiety rates. The link was shown to include general and social anxiety. The researchers contend that the thinking patterns common in anxiety and depression may develop as a response to intense childhood teasing (Roth et al., 2002).

Storch et al., (2003) further examined the link between childhood teasing and psychosocial distress in adulthood, offering results that support the findings of Roth et al., (2002). This study involved a pool of undergraduate students completing the Teasing Questionnaire (TQ), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – Trait Version (STAI-T), among other instruments. In addition to higher rates of depression and anxiety, the results indicated increased fear of negative evaluation and loneliness as related to pervasive childhood teasing. Storch et al., (2003) contend that psychosocial distress and maladjustment in childhood may be a byproduct of both the teasing experience itself and the individual's interpretation. The authors also offered that such retrospective inquiry (use of TQ) is a valid and effective means of exploring these relationships.

The link between teasing and depression is highlighted by a 14-year-old boy's suicide, believed to be fueled by school teasing (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Another girl killed herself following persistent teasing about her hair (Landau et al., 2001). Some victims of teasing direct their pain outwards such as Andy Williams, a 15 year old student who reported being constantly bullied and teased by schoolmates. In 2001 he left a note reading: "Andy Williams here. Unhappy kid. Tired of being picked on. Ready to

blow. Want to kill some people. Can anybody hear me? How did things get so bad?”, right before he opened fire at his school. Both the perpetrators of the Columbine and Virginia Tech shootings had reported being teased and bullied by others in their youth (Jenson, 2007).

These disturbing acts may only be a sign of things to come. Greenbaum (1989) found that students in 8th and 10th grade started bringing weapons such as knives, guns, and/or clubs to school at a rate of 9% and 10%, respectively, because they were afraid of being teased or bullied. In an effort to create a profile of school shooters The Secret Service found that 71% of them were targets of teasing and bullying (Moultapa et al., 2004). Unfortunately, often time’s innocent bystanders are injured or killed accidentally by these retaliatory acts. Ten year old James Osmondson, carried a gun to school for fear of being harassed and he accidentally shot and killed a classmate by mistake on the playground (Fontana, 1999).

Research has documented how teasing can lead to violence (Mooney et al., 1991; Warm, 1997), the development of body image disturbances and eating disorders (Eder, 1991; Lunner, et al., 2000; Thompson, et al., 1995; Thompson, et al., 1991; Warm, 1997), and patterns of victimization (Hodges & Perry, 1999) among youngsters. Social rejection in the form of teasing has been shown as a contributing factor in many recent school shootings (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). Additionally, it has been found that victimization in childhood can contribute to adult depression and anxiety, highlighting the longevity of the negative effects of teasing (McCabe, Anthony, Summerfeldt, Liss, & Swinson, 2003). The results of each of these are noteworthy in

that they provide evidence that teasing has repercussions beyond the immediate context. The potential effects can be so long lasting as to persist into adulthood in the form of eating disturbances and overall psychological distress.

Self Esteem

Self-esteem is thought to be one of the central factors affecting psychological well-being and social functioning. Self-esteem is thought of as the self-evaluation made by each individual, and as the general attitude a person holds about himself or herself (Baron, et al., 2001). A healthy self-esteem is manifested in overall acceptance of oneself as a person and in feelings of worthiness and self-confidence (Salmivalli, et al., 1999). Literature has shown that increased teasing in childhood is associated with lower self-esteem. It was also hypothesized that higher recollections of teasing in childhood was associated with low self-esteem in young adulthood (Casey-Cannon, et al., 2001; Gleason et al., 2000; Rigby, 2000). Teasing almost always focuses on the attributes of a person, portraying them in a negative fashion. This negative evaluation will permeate how a child ultimately feels about him/herself, consequently decreasing their self-esteem.

Kowalski (2003) offered additional information on the long term effects of teasing on self-esteem. After providing narratives describing an incident of being teased during childhood, participants were asked why they had chosen to share that particular experience. Responses included:

- I chose this episode because it impacted my social life and self-esteem greatly.

- It stands out to me like it was yesterday.
- It is the aspect that hurts me the most and is still causing problems in my life.
- Because I feel that incidences such as these leave permanent scars and are never really forgotten.
- The teasing was a constant occurrence and I still have bad feelings about it.
- It was a horrible experience that I probably never will forget.
- Although I had never considered myself ugly before, after that I became very obsessed with my appearance, and I felt ugly for a long time afterward. (p. 69)

Despite these incidences occurring several years earlier, these responses signified the magnitude of the impact left by being teased on the individual's self-esteem (Kowalski, 2003).

According to Englund, Levy, Hyson, and Sroufe (2000), the overall well-being of adolescents can be viewed as the connection between self-confidence and competence. Consequently, positive self-esteem is an essential psychosocial trait to healthy personality and general psychological well-being (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998; Roberts, Seifman, Pedersen, Chesir-Teran, Allem, Aber, Duran, & Hsueh, 2000). In fact, a positive self-esteem is a crucial problem-solving tool. It promotes a positive outlook on life and fosters the ability to cope with social difficulties (Chapman & Mullins, 2000; Laak, Heymans, & Podolskij, 1994).

Social Support

Past research has shown that one of the main influences on self-esteem is a person's environment while growing up (Burt, Cohen, & Bjorck, 1988; Oliver, & Paull,

1995). The quality of interpersonal relationships in the family and with peers is related to the child's level of self-esteem (Galvinhill, 2001; Kirk, 2002). Way and Robinson (2003) investigated the influences of family and friends on psychological adjustment and reported that higher levels of perceived support from both the family and friends resulted in significantly higher levels of self-esteem when compared to those with low perceived levels of family and friends support.

Oliver and Paull (1995) reported that people who expressed feeling high levels of acceptance from their parents while growing up as well as a sense of family cohesion had significantly higher levels of self-esteem compared to those who did not. Similarly, children who are highly accepted and regarded by their peers also showed higher levels of self-esteem (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). On the contrary, individuals who reported feeling high levels of parental control had significantly lower levels of self-esteem (Oliver, Paull, 1995). Having a family and friends reported as being helpful, supportive, and encouraging of self-expression are also positively correlated with self-esteem; conversely, families with frequent open anger and aggression with them has been demonstrated to be significantly and negatively related to self-esteem (Burt et al., 1988; Kirk, 2002).

The need for peer support, although important throughout childhood, intensifies during adolescence (Markiewicz, Doyle, & Brendgen, 2001; Reijntjes, Stegge, & Terwogt, 2006). Adolescence is a transitional period for social support as teens move away from parents as their primary source of support and turn to peer relationships that will provide support as they take on adult roles (Slavin-Williams and Berndt, 1990;

Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Peer support performs a special function in helping to alleviate the stress and depression brought on by the identity crisis in adolescence (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, & Eye, 1994; Young Berensen, Cohen, & Garcia, 2005).

Researchers (e.g., DuBois & Hirsch, 2000; Harris, 1998; Harter, Stocker, & Robinson, 1996) contend that children depend on peer interaction and support to develop and reinforce beliefs about the self, and a substantial body of literature suggests that social support buffers the effects of life stressors experienced among adolescents (McQueen, Getz, and Bray, 2003; Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullen, 1981; Procidano & Heller, 1983; Realmuto, August, & Egan, 2004).

Social Support and Self Esteem

Researchers have typically found that the perceived quality of family relationships, friendships, and/or school experiences is associated positively with psychological adjustment as indicated by self-esteem and/or depressive symptoms (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman, 1995). Luster and McAdoo (1995) found in their study of 123 African American, low-income adolescents that the perceived quality of family relationships was positively correlated with self-esteem. Similarly, Harter and Whitesell (1996) in their cross-sectional study of 1,725 middle class, primarily white adolescents found that parental support was positively associated with psychological adjustment (i.e., global self-worth and depressed affect).

One study has looked at the connections between the quality of interpersonal relationships in the family, self-esteem, and social acceptance by peers (Dekovic & Meeus, 1997). This study focused on the interpersonal relationships between parents and children (rather than focusing on the relationships in the family as a whole). In this study, parenting which is supportive, accepting, and minimizes the occurrence of hostile interactions with children is connected to both self-esteem and to child perceptions of peer acceptance (Dekovic & Meeus, 1997). In fact, the quality of interpersonal relationships in the family has been repeatedly linked with children's self-esteem. Helpfulness, supportiveness and encouragement of self-expression in the family are all positively correlated with self-esteem; whereas, open anger and aggression in the family has been demonstrated to be significantly and negatively related to self-esteem (Burt et al., 1988; Leung, Salini, & Barber, 1986; Nelson, 1984).

Self-esteem is also connected to peer acceptance, and is improved by high levels of support (Flaherty and Richman, 1986; Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Sroufe and Fleeson, 1986). Research has typically found that perceived friendship quality, peer support, or attachment to friends is positively associated with self-esteem (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Buhrmester & Yin, 1997; Cauce, 1986; Coates, 1985; Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Keefe & Berndt, 1996). When looking at the relationships between stress and self-esteem in relation to peer relationships, Wilburn and Smith, (2009) found family support explained 35% of the variation between stress and self-esteem, and peer support explained 34% of the variation between stress and self-esteem.

Way and Chen (2000) and Berndt and Savin-Williams (1993) have found that friendship support is positively associated with self-esteem and negatively associated with depressed feelings. They found that those who express greater satisfaction with their friends and peers typically report feeling better about themselves than those who express less satisfaction with friends and peers.

Effective Responses to Teasing

Since teasing appears to be pervasive throughout the lives of most, if not all individuals, research has started exploring the best ways to respond when teased in order to minimize the negative consequences on the victims, and the likelihood of an aggressive response from the perpetrator. In a study by Scambler et al. (1998), children viewed videotaped interactions in which one child was teased by two other children. In each video, the teased child, or target, responded in one of three ways: humorous response, ignoring response, or hostile response. The participants rated the target's response in terms of how effective they perceived the response to be, and how friendly and popular they perceived each child in the video to be. The participants rated the humorous response as the most effective response and the hostile response as the least effective response. It was also shown that the humorous response increased the likeability of both the perpetrator and the target. Use of the humor response also decreased the likelihood of future teasing. Participants who had histories of being teasers gave similar ratings of target friendliness in the hostile and ignore conditions. Participants who did not have histories of being teasers, however, gave similar ratings of target friendliness in the humorous and ignore conditions (Scambler et al., 1998). These

results are important and show that teased children can more effectively influence an interaction through humor than through the long-held advice by adults of ignoring.

The use of humor as an effective response to teasing has continued to be explored. Georgesen, Harris, Milich, and Young, (1999) replicated the findings of the study by Scambler et al., (1998) and also found that generic humorous responses to teasing were effective. Landau et al. (2001) also presented that the use of humorous responses are superior to hostility in responding to being teased.

Bias, Conoley, and Castillo (2005) expanded this research to illustrate how different types of humorous responses may be more effective than others. Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of different types of responses in reaction to a cartoon teasing stimuli. The subjects rated responses that were either Affiliative Humor, Self-Deprecating Humor, Aggressive Humor, Ignoring, or Physical Threat. Findings suggest that Affiliative humor (humor that is joining and makes light of the situation) is viewed as more effective than Self-Deprecating Humor, Aggressive Humor, Ignoring, and Physical Threat. When using an effective humorous response, targets were less likely to be teased in the future, feel more positive about themselves after the interaction, and may actually gain in social status with their peers.

Present Study

The present study builds on the existing empirical knowledge base regarding the relationship between teasing during childhood and adolescence, and psychosocial distress in adulthood, more specifically having a lower self esteem. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of an individual's environment, as defined by his or her

teasing history with their peers and families, at different stages during their development on their level of self-esteem to determine if certain environments are conducive to limiting or even negating the negative consequences of being teased. More specifically, if individuals are able to interpret teasing as pro-social, they may be more inclined to respond in a more favorable manor, be less likely to perceive themselves as a victim, and have less negative effects towards their self esteem.

Because memory is highly influenced by so many factors (e.g. emotional state at time of event), there is much debate about the accuracy and validity of using retrospective data. A recent study by Batcho, Nave, and DaRin (2011) comparing the retrospective memories of childhood experiences with their parents' recollections of those specified events showed that the use of retrospection memories was a fairly reliable source of information. In another recent study, Lalande and Bonanno (2011) found that while participants tended to under-recall all types of life events, recollection was more accurate for potential traumatic events (e.g. being teased). Although direct observation is inarguably a more accurate method of data collection, the use of retrospective data has been shown to be a valid and reliable form of data collection.

Research Questions

The current study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What relationship exists between the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence with college self-esteem levels?
2. Which teasing source influences a college student's current level of self-esteem the most?
3. When is teasing from one's family or peers most influential on their college level self-esteem?
4. Which source of teasing was rated highest/lowest in negativity?
5. Will individuals who recall being initially exposed to pro-social teasing be less negatively affected by anti-social teasing (i.e. have higher levels of reported self-esteem) when they experience anti-social teasing later in life than those who were not initially exposed to pro-social teasing and later experience anti-social teasing?
6. Can a pro-social teasing environment in one area of a child's social life (e.g. friends or family) counterbalance the effects of an anti-social teasing environment in a different aspect of their social lives (e.g. family or friends) if they are experiencing them at the same time?
7. Will social support from family and peers have similar relationships to the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence as college self-esteem levels?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The present chapter describes the methodology used in the current study. The study investigated an individual's perceptions of being teased at three different stages while growing up through the use of an online questionnaire. This chapter describes the participants, instruments, and procedures used.

Participants

The 203 participants for the study were recruited from the undergraduate student body at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. St. Mary's University is identified as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, with over 50% of its enrollment being from Hispanic descent. Participants were comprised of 68.5% women (N=139) and 31.5% men (N=64), which is slightly higher than the university ratio of 58.1% female, 41.9% male. Racial and ethnic composition of the sample was 64.0% (N=130) who identified as Hispanic/Latino, 28.1% (N=57) as Caucasian, 2.5% (N=5) as Asian, 2.0% (N=4) as African American, and 3.4% (N=7) identified themselves as "Other" (5: multiracial, 1: Pacific Islander, 1: Choose not to identify). The age range of the participants was 18-46 with the mean age being 21.1 with a standard deviation of 4.99. The classification of the participants ranged from freshman to senior level college students. Unfortunately this data was not collected, so a breakdown of the participants by grade level was not possible.

Instruments

Demographic Information Sheet (DIS)

The DIS requested information about the volunteer's current age, gender, racial/ethnic identity, number of siblings, and birth order. Volunteers were also asked to provide their parents' occupations and household income in order to determine social economical status.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

Level of general self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). It consists of 10 items that measures agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Items were positively and negatively coded. Scores on the RSE scale range from 10 to 40, with higher scores corresponding to higher self-esteem. The RSE has been used with racially and ethnically diverse populations and its reliability and validity have been well established (Gray-Little, Williams, & Hancock, 1997). Fleming and Courtney (1984) found the RSE scale to have a $\alpha = 0.88$ with college students and a test-retest coefficient of 0.82 after a one week period. For this study's sample the RSE had a cronbach $\alpha = 0.69$.

Family & Peer Teasing Scale (FPTS)

There was no psychometric measure for family and peer teasing history that met the needs of this study; so, one was created based on a review of the literature on family and peer teasing. The *FPTS* consists of 8 items on a Likert-type 5-point scale, 4 items concerning the 'type of teasing' (pro-social or anti-social), and 4 items concerning the

‘frequency of teasing’ (Appendix C). The *FPTS* was repeated for each of the three different stages while growing up (Elementary School, Middle School, High School).

Each group of four items consisted of two items asking about teasing from family, and the other two items about teasing from peers. An example of the ‘type of teasing’ questions on the *FPTS* was: “What was the teasing from other kids like?” The anchors of the five point likert scale ranged from (1) “Friendly” to (5) “Mean”. An example of the ‘frequency of teasing’ questions was: “How much did you feel other kids teased you?” The items were also measured on a five point likert scale from (1) “Not at all” to (5) “A lot”. The answers for the two ‘frequency’ questions for each source (family or peer) were averaged and multiplied by the two answers for the ‘type’ questions for the same source for each time period. These combined numbers result in the *Family Teasing Score (FTS)* and *Peer Teasing Score (PTS)*, respectively. The results of this study showed that the *FPTS* had a cronbach $\alpha = 0.85, 0.87,$ and 0.85 for the time periods: elementary school, middle school, and high school, respectively.

The Perceived Social Support from Family Scale (PSS-FA)

The level of familial emotional support was assessed with the PSS-FA. This scale consists of 20 questions with “yes”, “no”, or “I don’t know” response choices. The PSS-FA measures the extent to which an individual perceives that her or his needs for emotional support, information, and feedback are being met by family members (Procidano & Heller, 1983). Procidano and Heller (1983) reported good reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.90$) and construct validity for this measure. It has also shown to have good reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.90 - 0.91$) and validity with ethnically and racially

diverse populations (Way & Leadbeater, 1999). For this study's sample the PSS-FA had a cronbach $\alpha = 0.73$.

The Perceived Social Support from Friends (PSS-FR)

The level of peer emotional support was assessed with the PSS-FR. This scale is also comprised of 20 questions with the required responses being “yes”, “no”, or “I don't know”. The PSS-FR measures the extent to which an individual perceives that friends are meeting her or his needs for emotional support, information, and feedback (Procidano & Heller, 1983). Procidano and Heller (1983) also reported good reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.88$) and construct validity for this measure. As with the PSS-FA, the PSS-FR has also shown to have good reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.88 - 0.90$) and validity with ethnically and racially diverse populations (Way & Leadbeater, 1999). For this study's sample the RSE had a cronbach $\alpha = 0.71$.

Procedure

The participation of these human subjects was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas A&M University and St Mary's University. Professors of various Psychology courses at St. Mary's University were contacted via email requesting permission to solicit the student's in their class for participation in this research study. Once permission was obtained, each class was visited by the researcher (a total of thirteen classes were visited). The researcher explained the purpose of the study and students were asked if they would like to volunteer to complete a survey located online. The students who volunteered were given an information form explaining the purpose of the study. The information form had contact information for additional

questions or if they experienced any discomfort and desired a counseling referral. The form also contained the URL for the website for the online survey. All data was collected via online survey outside of class. Total completion time for the online survey was between 15-20 minutes.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Question # 1

What Relationship Exists between the Retrospective Memories of Teasing Experiences in Childhood and Adolescence with College Self-Esteem Levels?

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between recollections of teasing experiences from both family and friends as measured by the Family & Peer Teasing Scale (FPTS) at three different times (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School) and their present level of self-esteem as determined by the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. Relationships were shown to be statistically significant between all measures of teasing and self-esteem (Table 1) at the $p < .001$ level. All correlations were negative and determined to have a medium effect size by using standards outlined by Cohen (1988), ($.30 \leq r \leq .49$ are defined as a medium effect size). The statistically significant relationships indicate that as an individual's teasing score increases, indicating a higher frequency and more negative teasing, their self esteem score decreased.

The Peer Teasing Score (PTS) was higher than the Family Teasing Score (FTS) during elementary and middle school time intervals. Independent T-tests reveal that the mean PTS ($M = 34.7$, $SD = 32.7$) for elementary school, and middle school ($M = 35.3$, $SD = 36.0$), were statistically significantly higher than the mean FTS at the same time periods ($M = 20.1$, $SD = 25.8$, $t[404] = 4.99$, $p = .001$; & $M = 18.8$, $SD = 26.2$, $t[404] = 5.28$, $p = .001$, respectively). This indicates that the teasing experienced from peers was

reported as being significantly more negative and frequent than teasing experienced from family members during elementary and middle school.

When the sample was divided by gender as seen in table 2, the mean RSE scores for males and females are not statistically different (males: $M = 31.4$, $SD = 3.90$, females: $M = 31.9$, $SD = 4.24$). Consistent with the overall sample, both males and females reported statistically significantly higher levels of peer teasing than family teasing during elementary and middle school. However, the mean FTS during elementary and high school for females ($M = 23.1$, $SD = 25.8$; & 15.5 , $SD = 25.7$) was significantly higher than the males ($M = 13.4$, $SD = 18.2$, $t[404] = 4.37$, $p = .001$; 9.31 , $SD = 17.8$, $t[404] = 2.84$, $p = .001$). This indicates that while the males and females were not significantly different in their experience of peer teasing, the female subjects reported significantly more anti-social teasing from their families, during elementary and high school compared to males.

Table 1

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Teasing History and Self-Esteem

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean (SD)
1 RSE	--							31.77 (4.14)
2 PTS Elem	-.30*	--						34.72 (32.7)
3 FTS Elem	-.35*	.28*	--					20.07 (25.8)
4 PTS Mid	-.33*	.58*	.26*	--				35.34 (36.0)
5 FTS Mid	-.34*	.25*	.82*	.36*	--			18.81 (26.2)
6 PTS High	-.30*	.37*	.18*	.46*	.22*	--		15.27 (22.8)
7 FTS High	-.30*	.18*	.58*	.20*	.61*	.37*	--	13.57 (23.7)

Note: *p < .01, N = 203

RSE: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; PTS: Peer Teasing Scale; FTS: Scale; Elem: Elementary School; Mid: Middle School; High: High School

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation for Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale scores and Teasing Scores for Males vs. Females

Scales		Male	Female
		(n=64)	(n=139)
1	RSE	31.41(3.90)	31.94(4.24)
2	PTS Elem	32.61(28.1)	35.69(34.7)
3	FTS Elem	13.41(18.2)	23.13(28.1)
4	PTS Mid	36.02(36.0)	35.03(36.1)
5	FTS Mid	15.95(24.8)	20.13(26.8)
6	PTS High	16.20(23.6)	14.85(22.4)
7	FTS High	9.31(17.8)	15.54(25.7)

RSE: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; PTS: Peer Teasing Scale; FTS: Scale; Elem: Elementary School; Mid: Middle School; High: High School

Question # 2

Which Teasing Source Influences a College Student's Current Level of Self-Esteem the Most?

The degree to which teasing history predicted Self-Esteem levels in college was calculated by a two-tailed multiple regression analysis using the scores from the Family & Peer Teasing Scale (FPTS) to assess the family and peer teasing during elementary, middle, and high school as the predictor variables. The two-tailed multiple regression analysis showed that both family and peer teasing at different stages of development had significant influence on self-esteem levels (Table 3). Using the six predictors a statistically significant model emerged, $F(6,196) = 9.06, p < .001$, which accounted for 19.3% of the variance in the self-esteem levels reported (Adjusted $R^2 = .193$).

While the entire model had a significant effect on reported self-esteem levels in college, none of the predictor variables were shown to be individually significant at the $p < .05$ level. Because prior research has shown that increased teasing levels are negatively correlated with self esteem levels, it is appropriate to convert the results into a one-tailed test. When the p value is divided in half three variables were shown to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (Family Teasing in Elementary School ($p = .036$) Peer Teasing in Middle School ($p = .043$), and Peer Teasing in High School ($p = .039$). Since all the variables were entered into the model at the same time the results given for each predictor variable shows the contribution of each variable but only in combination with all the other variables.

To understand the relationship of the independent variable more deeply a sequential multiple regression was run (Table 4). This method assesses the influence of each predictor variable one at a time as it is put into the model. The order that each variable enters the model is very important and should not be done randomly. The order of variable entry followed the historical time of influence, from early in life to later. Using time as a rationale is reasonable because developmental psychology research underscores the importance of family influence in elementary school forming a foundation and then in adolescence, peer influence will have increasing influence (Slavin-Williams and Berndt, 1990; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

The first predictor variable entered into the sequential multiple regression was Family Teasing during Elementary School. This single predictor variable model accounted for 11.9% of the variance in self-esteem levels reported in college (Adjusted $R^2 = .119$), $F(1,201) = 28.4$, $p < .001$. The single predictor variable had a $\beta = -.352$, significant at the $p < .001$ level. The next predictor entered into the model was Peer Teasing during Middle School, raising the adjusted R^2 .060 to .179, and having an $F(2,200) = 23.1$, $p < .001$. The β 's for Family Teasing during Elementary and Peer Teasing during Middle School were $-.285$, and $-.261$, respectively, with $p < .001$ for both variables. The final predictor variable entered into the model was Peer Teasing during High School, resulting in an $F(3,199) = 17.6$, $p = .000$, and increasing the adjusted R^2 from .019 to .198. The β 's for the three predictor variables were $-.273$, $-.187$, and $-.168$ respectively, having a maximum $p = .019$ for Peer Tease during High School.

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting College Student's Current Level of Self Esteem (N = 203)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (p)</i>
Family Teasing Elem.	-.034	.019	-.210	-1.812	.071
Peer Tease Elem.	-.011	.010	-.085	-1.055	.293
Family Tease Mid.	-.002	.019	-.015	-.127	.899
Peer Tease Mid.	-.017	.010	-.149	-1.726	.086
Family Tease High	-.013	.015	-.073	-.850	.396
Peer Tease High	-.025	.014	-.136	-1.771	.078
R ² = .217 Adjusted R ² = .193 F = 9.056, p < .001					

Table 4

Summary of Sequential Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting College Student's Current Level of Self Esteem (N = 203)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (p)</i>
Step 1					
Family Teasing during Elementary School	-.056	.011	-.352	-5.326	.000
$R^2 = .124$ Adjusted $R^2 = .119$ $F = 28.363, p < .001$					
Step 2					
Family Teasing during Elementary School	-.046	.011	-.285	-4.318	.000
Peer Teasing during Middle School	-.030	.008	-.261	-3.959	.000
$R^2 = .187$ Adjusted $R^2 = .179$ $F = 23.054, p < .001$					
Step 3					
Family Teasing during Elementary School	-.044	.010	-.273	-4.180	.000
Peer Teasing during Middle School	-.022	.008	-.187	-2.590	.010
Peer Teasing during High School	-.031	.013	-.168	-2.371	.019
$R^2 = .210$ Adjusted $R^2 = .198$ $F = 17.599, p < .001$					

Question # 3

In What Time Period Is Teasing from One's Family or Peers Most Influential on College Level Self-Esteem?

In order to determine which predictor variable from the *Family & Peer Teasing Scale (FPTS)* at three different times (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School) had the strongest influence on college level self-esteem, the β 's from the first multiple regression analysis were looked at (Table 3). Family teasing during elementary school had the highest β of -.210, indicating it has the most influence on college levels of self-esteem. Conversely, family teasing during middle school had the lowest β of -.015, indicating family teasing had the least influence on the college level of self-esteem during middle school. The largest β for peer influence occurred during middle school (-.149), indicating that self-esteem in college is most influenced by one's peers teasing during middle school.

Question # 4

Which Source of Teasing was Rated Highest/Lowest in Negativity?

In order to determine which teasing source was rated highest in negativity a 2 x 3 repeated measures ANOVA compared the teasing source (Family or Peer) vs. time (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School). The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. Table 5 shows a significant main effect for teasing source, $F(1, 202) = 33.66, p < .001$, indicating that peer teasing was higher than family teasing. Another significant main effect was shown for time of teasing, $F(1.93, 390.6) = 48.98, p < .001$, indicating subjects reporting the highest teasing scores in elementary

Table 5

Main Effects of Teasing Source, Time, and Interaction Effect

	F	df	Sig. (p)	95% Confidence Interval		
				Mean	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teasing Source	33.656	1	.000			
Peer				28.443	25.007	31.880
Family				17.484	14.393	20.576
Error		202				
Time	48.978	1.934	.000			
Elementary				27.393	24.137	30.648
Middle				27.078	23.517	30.639
High				14.421	11.765	17.078
Error		390.581				
Teasing Source * Time	24.474	2	.000			
Peer Elem				34.717	30.185	39.249
Peer Mid				35.342	30.365	40.320
Peer High				15.271	12.121	18.421
Family Elem				20.069	16.501	23.637
Family Mid				18.813	15.188	22.438
Family High				13.571	10.296	16.847
Error		404				

school and the lowest during high school. There was a significant interaction effect between teasing source and time $F(2, 404) = 24.47, p < .001$ (plotted in Figure 1).

Using the data in table 5, dependent sample t-tests showed that the teasing scores from peers during elementary school ($N = 203; M = 35.72; SE = 2.30$) and middle school ($N = 203; M = 35.34; SE = 2.52$) are significantly higher than the next highest mean, which is that of family teasing during elementary school ($N = 203; M = 20.07; SE = 1.81$).

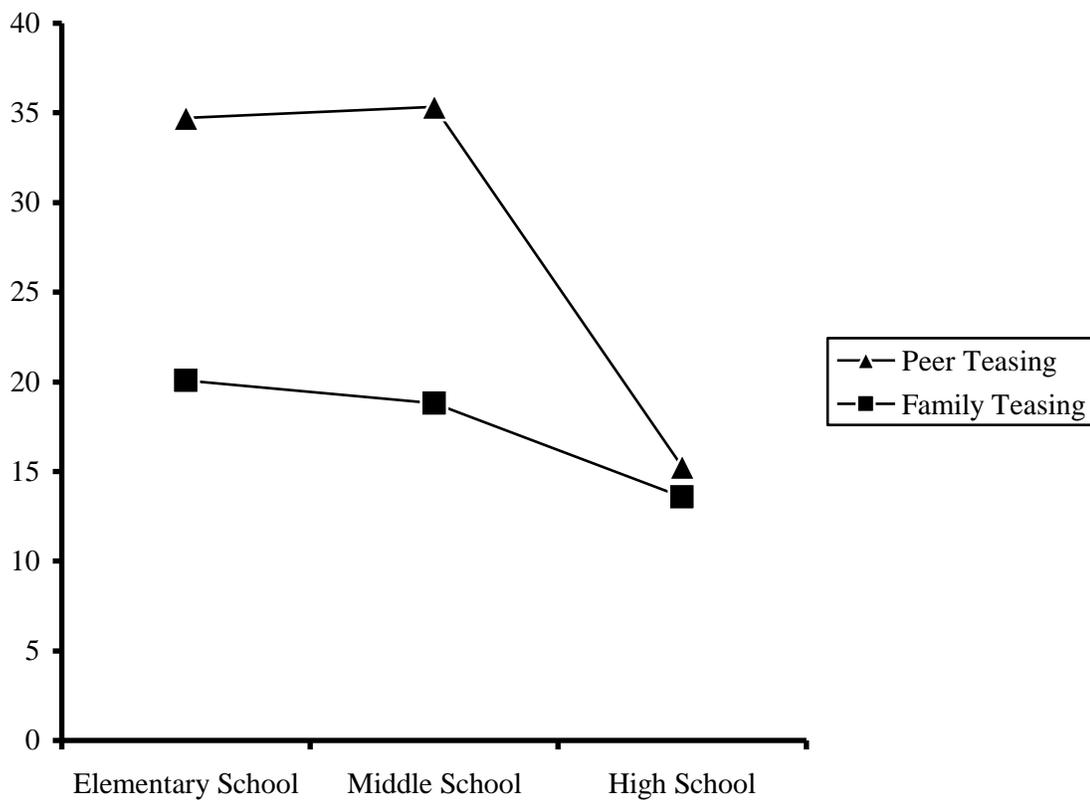


Figure 1. *Plot of Interaction Effect of Teasing Source & Time*

Question # 5

Will Individuals Who Recall Being Initially Exposed to Pro-Social Teasing be Less Negatively Affected by Anti-Social Teasing (i.e. Have Higher Levels of Reported Self-Esteem) When They Experience Anti-Social Teasing Later in Life than Those Who Were Not Initially Exposed to Pro-Social Teasing and Later Experience Anti-Social Teasing?

To answer questions 5 and 6, pro-social and anti-social teasing were operationally defined. Pro-social teasing was operationally defined as positive responses on both of the type of teasing questions on the *Family & Peer Teasing Scale* (4 questions total per scale, two for family teasing and two for peer teasing). For example one of the ‘type of teasing’ questions was: “What was the teasing from other kids like?” The item was measured on a five point likert scale (1) “Friendly” to (5) “Mean”. An answer of 1 or 2 on both questions for family or peer teasing type classified the subject’s teasing experience as “pro-social”.

Anti-social teasing was operationally defined somewhat more complexly using both the type of teasing and the frequency questions. The teasing numbers for each subject’s *Family & Peer Teasing Scale* was determined by multiplying the two “teasing type” responses for family or peers by the average of the 2 “teasing frequency” responses, which are also measured on a five point likert scale (1) “Not at all” to (5) “A lot” for family or peers, respectively. The teasing number is considered to be at the anti-social level when both teasing type questions were answered with a 4 or 5, indicating anti-social type of teasing, and the two frequency questions averaged 4 or higher, indicating frequent teasing ($4 \times 4 \times 4 = 64$). Thus the criterion for anti-social teasing was a

score of 64 or higher. Including the ‘frequency’ of the teasing with the teasing type was important in operationally defining anti-social teasing because it ensured frequently harsh teasing.

The mean RSE scores of the subjects that reported being teased at a pro-social level by their peers and/or family, without any reported teasing at the anti-social level while in elementary school, but later reported teasing at the anti-social level from their peers and/or family, were compared to the mean RSE scores of the subjects who did not report teasing at the pro-social or anti-social level while in elementary school, but did report teasing at the anti-social level from their peers and/or family later in life. It was hypothesized that the group with initial exposure to teasing at the pro-social level would have higher mean RSE scores than the group without initial exposure of teasing at the pro-social level. The results showed that the mean RSE score for the group with initial pro-social teasing exposure was 31.0 ($SD = 4.44$, $n=27$), while the mean RSE score for the group without initial pro-social teasing exposure was 32.0 ($SD = 3.29$, $n=28$). An independent t-test confirm that the difference is not statistically significant, $t(53) = 0.957$, $p = .343$, failing to reject the null hypothesis.

At first glance it appears that the hypothesis of pro-social teasing ‘vaccinating’ against future anti-social teasing was not supported. However, the results raised a question, if a subject is actually “vaccinated” from anti-social teasing during elementary school then all future teasing may not be recognized as anti-social teasing. In an attempt to correct for this possibility the mean RSE scores of all subjects that reported being teased at a pro-social level by their peers and/or family, without any reported teasing at

the anti-social level while in elementary school, regardless of their reported teasing later in life, were compared to those subjects who did not report teasing at the pro-social or anti-social level while in elementary school, and reported teasing at the anti-social level from their peers and/or family later in life. The results still did not support the hypothesized results of question 5. The RSE score of the initial pro-social teasing group being 32.6 ($SD = 3.62$, $n = 62$) compared to the non-initial pro-social teasing groups mean RSE score of 32.0 ($SD = 3.29$, $n = 28$). Although the RSE score is in the predicted direction, independent t-tests show that the difference is not statistically significant, $t(88) = 0.748$, $p = .456$.

A follow up question about the amount of pro-social teasing needed to “vaccinate” against future anti-social teasing was investigated. Perhaps subjects need to be exposed to a larger amount of pro-social teasing initially to counteract the effects of later anti-social teasing. To explore this possibility, the mean RSE scores for subjects who reported teasing at the pro-social level from both areas (family and peer) during elementary school were compared to those of subjects that reported no teasing at the pro-social or anti-social level during elementary school but did experience teasing at the anti-social level later in life. The results again showed that the initial pro-social teasing group had a higher mean RSE score of 33.4 ($SD = 2.52$, $n = 38$), compared to the non-initial pro-social teasing groups RSE score of 32.0 ($SD = 3.29$, $n = 28$). An independent one-tailed t-test revealed that the difference was statistically significant, $t(64) = 1.96$, $p = .028$. A statistically significant difference between the mean RSE scores of subjects who were initially exposed to teasing at the pro-social level from both home and school

during elementary school and later experience teasing at the antisocial level when compared to subjects who were not initially exposed to teasing at a pro-social level before being later exposed to teasing at an anti-social level is revealed at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Question # 6

Can a Pro-Social Teasing Environment in One Area of a Child's Social Life (e.g., Friends or Family) Counterbalance the Effects of an Anti-Social Teasing Environment in a Different Aspect of Their Social Lives (e.g., Family or Friends) if They Are Experiencing Them at the Same Time?

To answer this question the subjects were separated into three different groups based on their reported teasing at the anti-social and pro-social level and a specific time period as follows: Group 1 - were participants teased at the anti-social level by one source without any reported teasing at the pro-social level from the other source concurrently. Group 2 – were participants teased at the anti-social level by both sources at the same time period. Group 3 – were participants teased at the anti-social level by one source and at the pro-social level for the other source concurrently). Table 6 lists the mean and standard deviation RSE scale score for each group. The hypothesized results were that subjects who experienced both teasing at the anti-social and pro-social levels at the same time from the different sources, will have a higher RSE scores than those who only experience teasing at the anti-social level from one or both sources, without any reported experience of teasing at the pro-social level at the same specified time.

The three different means were compared to each other for the three different times in a one-way analysis of variance (Table 7). The ANOVA indicated that the mean for the group that experienced teasing at both the anti-social and pro-social level during a specified time period in the hypothesized direction when compared to the groups that only experienced teasing at the anti-social level from one or both sources without experiencing any teasing at the pro-social level for each time period. Using a one-tailed test reveals a statistical significant difference between the means of the group 1 and groups 2 & 3 during elementary school, implying that pro-social teasing can have a counterbalancing effect on the negative effects of anti-social teasing has on self-esteem levels.

Table 6

Mean and Standard Deviations of RSE Scores for Subjects Experiencing Teasing on the Anti-Social Level

	Pro-Social & Anti-Social Teasing	Anti-Social Teasing from 1 Source	Anti-Social Teasing from Both Sources
Elementary School	30.41 (6.19) n = 17	27.75 (5.27) n = 25	26.14 (4.91) n = 7
Middle School	31.00 (4.90) n = 23	28.48 (4.31) n = 21	28.22 (4.21) n = 9
High School	30.08 (5.37) n = 12	26.14 (5.84) n = 7	26.67 (4.93) n = 3

Table 7

One Way ANOVA Comparing Means of Subjects Experiencing Teasing on the Anti-Social Level

Time	SS	df	MS	F	p	F-Critical
Elementary School						
Between Groups	114.907	2	57.454	1.856	.0168	3.1996
Within Groups	1424.256	46	30.962			
Total	1539.163	48				
Middle School						
Between Groups	88.298	2	44.149	2.017	0.144	3.1826
Within Groups	1094.181	50	21.884			
Total	1182.479	52				
High School						
Between Groups	78.568	2	39.284	1.308	0.294	3.5219
Within Groups	570.449	19	30.024			
Total	649.017	21				

Question #7

Will Social Support from Family and Peers Have Similar Relationships to the Retrospective Memories of Teasing Experiences in Childhood and Adolescence as College Self-Esteem Levels?

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between recollections of teasing from both family and friends at three different times while growing up (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School) and their level of perceived social support from their family and peers as measured by the *Perceived Social Support for Family* (PSS-FA) and *Perceived Social Support for Friends* scales (PSS-FR), respectively. Relationships were shown to be statistically significant between all measures of family teasing and family support measured in college (Table 8) at the $p < .001$ level, but not significant between any measures of peer teasing and peer support (Table 9) at the $p < .05$ level.

The degree teasing history predicted perceived current social support from the family was assessed by running a multiple regression analysis using family teasing during elementary school, middle school, and high school as the predictor variables (Table 10). The multiple regression analysis showed that all three predictor variables made a significant model, $F(3, 199) = 10.2, p < .001$, accounting for 12.0% of the variance of perceived social support reported in college (Adjusted $R^2 = .120$). The only predictor that was shown to be significant beyond the $p < .05$ level was that of family teasing during high school ($p = .002$).

While both reported levels of self-esteem and family social support were negatively correlated with an individual's teasing history, differences in their manner of influence are apparent. The greatest predictor for self-esteem levels in college was teasing during elementary school, whereas the greatest predictor of family social support in college was family teasing during high school. Peer teasing history had no significant relationship with perceived social support from peers in college. Therefore, reported social support from family and peers in college did not have a similar relationship to the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence as did report self-esteem in college.

Table 8

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Teasing History and PSS-FA

	Scales	1	2	3	4	Mean (SD)
1	PSS-FA	--				12.02 (3.15)
2	FTS Elem	-.29*	--			20.07 (25.8)
3	FTS Mid	-.28*	.82*	--		18.81 (26.2)
4	FTS High	-.35*	.58*	.61*	--	13.57 (23.7)

Note: * $p < .01$, $N = 203$

PSS-FA: Perceived Family Social Support for Family; FTS: Family Teasing Scale; Elem: Elementary School; Mid: Middle School; High: High School

Table 9

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Teasing History and PSS-FR

	Scales	1	2	3	4	Mean (SD)
1	PSS-FA	--				12.89 (2.42)
2	PTS Elem	-.092	--			34.72 (32.7)
3	PTS Mid	-.004	.58*	--		35.34 (36.0)
4	PTS High	-.061	.37*	..46*	--	15.27 (22.8)

Note: * $p < .01$, $N = 203$

PSS-FR: Perceived Family Social Support for Friends; PTS: Peer Teasing Scale; Elem: Elementary School; Mid: Middle School; High: High School

Table 10

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting College Student's Current Level of Perceived Social Support for Families (N = 203)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (p)</i>
Family Teasing Elem.	-.015	.014	-.123	-1.041	.299
Family Tease Mid.	-.002	.015	-.014	-.188	.906
Family Tease High	-.036	.011	-.269	-3.177	.002
R ² = .134 Adjusted R ² = .120 F = 10.223, p < .001					

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The current chapter presents a discussion of the study's results. The primary goal of this study was to examine the effects of an individual's teasing history with their peers and families, at different stages during their development on their current level of self-esteem. This study explored the relationship between the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence with college self-esteem levels. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will look at the research questions asked and discuss the results obtained. The second section will address the limitations of the study. The third section will note the possible implications and usefulness of this study. The final section will state some suggestions for future research.

Question 1: What relationship exists between the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence with college self-esteem levels?

The results indicated a negative relationship between teasing history and reported levels of self-esteem. The more negative and frequent the subjects' reported teasing the lower their level of reported self-esteem, which is consistent with prior research (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001; Gleason, et al., 2000; Kowalski, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2001). These results are significant because they reinforce the findings of previous research that negative consequences of anti-social teasing are not limited to the time of occurrence, but are long lasting and can extend into adulthood.

Questions 2 & 3: Which teasing source influences a college student's current level of self-esteem the most? When is teasing from one's family or peers most influential on their college level self-esteem?

The results showed that a history of family and peer teasing are significant predictors of college levels of self-esteem. Not surprisingly, family teasing during elementary school was shown to be the most influential teasing source influencing adult self-esteem. The most influential time period for peer teasing upon self-esteem was during middle school. These results were expected based on developmental psychology research which underscores the importance of family influence in elementary school forming a foundation and then in adolescence, peer influence will have increasing influence.

Consistent with Cash's (1995) results, this study also found that peer teasing was reported significantly more than family teasing during elementary and middle school. Females in this study also reported experiencing significantly more anti-social teasing from their families during elementary school than males. No other significant difference in teasing history was reported for family teasing during middle school and high school and for peer teasing at all three times between male and females participants.

Question 4: Which source of teasing was rated highest/lowest in negativity?

When controlling for the factor of time, teasing from peers was rated as being more negative and frequent than teasing from family members. When the factor of time was isolated from the source it was shown that teasing during elementary and middle school was rated as being more frequent and negative than the teasing in high school.

The interaction effect between source and time reveal that peer teasing during elementary and middle school was rated as being the highest in negativity and frequency, and family teasing during high school as being the lowest.

Question 5: Will individuals who recall being initially exposed to pro-social teasing be less negatively affected by anti-social teasing (i.e. have higher levels of reported self-esteem) when they experience anti-social teasing later in life than those who were not initially exposed to pro-social teasing and later experience anti-social teasing?

The present study wanted to investigate if somebody could be “vaccinated” from teasing by being initially exposed to teasing at the pro-social level prior to experiencing teasing at the anti-social level. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale scores for subjects who reported being teased at the pro-social level during elementary school (by either or both sources) and later teased at the anti-social level were compared to those of subjects who did not reported being teased at a pro-social level while in elementary school, but reported teasing at an anti-social level later in life. The hypothesis, based on previous research (Barnett, et al., 2004) was that the RSE scores would be higher for the first group because the subjects would interpret teasing as a positive experience and would be less adversely affected by teasing at an anti-social level. The results did not show any significant difference between the mean RSE scores for the two groups.

Although the results were not as expected they raised some interesting points: If a subject is actually “vaccinated” from anti-social teasing during elementary school, then all future teasing may not be reported as being at the anti-social level. Also, perhaps the

amount of teasing at a pro-social level experienced during elementary school would need to be at a high level (from both sources) in order to “vaccinate” somebody from future teasing at an anti-social level. For these reasons the mean RSE scores for the subjects who reported being teased at the pro-social level in elementary school by either source as well as by both sources, regardless of the type of teasing reported later in life, were compared to the RSE scores of the subjects who did not report any teasing at the pro-social level during elementary school, but did report teasing at the anti-social level later in life. The results showed that the RSE scores for the groups with initial exposure to teasing at the pro-social level during elementary school were slightly higher than the other groups, with the group that reported pro-social teasing from both groups during elementary school being statistically significantly higher. Therefore, it does appear that initial exposure to predominately pro-social teasing may vaccinate an individual from the negative effects of anti-social teasing.

Question 6: Can a pro-social teasing environment in one area of a child’s social life (e.g friends or family) counterbalance the effects of an anti-social teasing environment in a different aspect of their social lives (e.g family or friends) if they are experiencing them at the same time?

Whether teasing at the pro-social level from one source (family or peer) or both sources would counterbalance the negative effects on reported self-esteem levels teasing at the anti-social level was examined. The mean RSE score for subjects teased at the anti-social level from one and both sources, without any reported teasing at the pro-social level were compared to the mean RSE scores for subjects that reported being

teased at both the anti-social and pro-social level concurrently during each of the three time periods. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the RSE scores for the group that was teased both pro-socially and anti-socially during elementary school. These results imply that pro-social teasing may be enough to counterbalance the negative consequences of anti-social teasing elementary school.

Question 7: Will social support from family and peers have similar relationships to the retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence as college self-esteem levels?

The final research question of this study was to determine if reported levels of social support from family and peers would have a similar relationship to reported self-esteem levels as retrospective memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between teasing experiences at the three different time periods and perceived social support from family and peers as measured by the *Perceived Social Support for Family* (PSS-FA) and *Perceived Social Support for Friends* (PSS-FR) scales, respectively. The results showed that a significant negative relationship exists between PSS-FA and teasing history, but not between PSS-FR and teasing history. Further exploration of the relationship between teasing history and PSS-FA revealed that teasing history is a valid predictor of family social support, but unlike self-esteem the greatest predictor was family teasing during high school, not elementary school. Therefore, reported levels of social support from family and peers in college do not have similar relationships to the retrospective

memories of teasing experiences in childhood and adolescence as do reported self-esteem levels in college.

Limitations

The generalizability of the results may be limited due to the demographic make-up of the sample. The sample of college students was composed of 68.5% females and 31.5% males. Because research has shown that males and females differ in their teasing behaviors and suggests that they may perceive teasing differently as well (Mooney, et al., 1991 & Mouttapa, et al., 2004), the results may be indicative of a gender difference between males and females. Conversely, considering that the female participants reported significantly more teasing from their family during high school, the combination of data with the male participants may have influenced the mean self-esteem scores.

Another demographic limitation of the study is that the sample surveyed was also comprised of a majority of Hispanic/Latino students (64%), with only 2.5% classifying themselves as Caucasian. Limited research has been conducted showing how differently Hispanic/Latino children and adolescents interpret teasing compared to Caucasian children and adolescents. The results may be generalized to other universities which have been classified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (total Hispanic enrollment constitutes a minimum of 25% of the total enrollment), but may not be applicable to universities with different demographic make-ups.

Another limitation to this study was the use of retrospective data. The subjective memories of the subjects could have been skewed by recent events or poor memory.

Without direct observation of the teasing events it is difficult to determine the actual type and frequency each subject encountered at each specified time period. A majority of the subjects surveyed reported a family and peer teasing score between the pro-social and anti-social level for all three time periods. The possibility arises that any anti-social teasing the subjects may have experienced in the past was negated by prior or concurrent pro-social teasing, resulting in a reduced emotional response while being teased and future assessment of these teasing incidences as benign.

This may account for another limitation of the study, the relatively small n's for each group teased at the pro-social and anti-social level for each of the three time periods. A majority of the subjects in this study reported that their teasing experiences during the specified time periods (Elementary School, Middle School, and High School) were not at a pro-social or anti-social level. Because their reported teasing experiences were not classified as either negative or positive their data could not be used in answering questions five and six.

Despite this limitation, further retrospective research on this topic could prove useful. Retrospective reports are likely the most cost-effective way to study of the relationship of teasing history and adult self esteem levels. It would then be interesting to carry out prospective studies that would follow samples of children who report certain types of teasing from their family and/or peers and compare their reported reactions and interpretations with what has been learned from the retrospective reports of adults who have reported similar types of teasing.

Implications

In addition to showing that pro-social teasing experiences could vaccinate someone from the negative impact of an anti-social teasing experience, this study also provided other useful information in the field of teasing. It added to the research noting the long lasting effects of teasing. It reiterated the point that the effects of teasing are not limited to the event itself, but can persist throughout some one's lifetime causing significant psychological distress.

The clarification that family teasing is most influential during elementary school and peer teasing is most influential during middle school is extremely helpful in the battle against the damages of teasing. The indication that teasing during elementary school by families is most influential is extremely helpful in that it suggests that interventions within the home environment may have the greatest impact with children during these formative years. The recognition that teasing during high school is the least influential on self-esteem is significant because it suggests that interventions at this time to combat teasing may already be too late.

These results also have significant clinical implications as well. Having the knowledge of when specific types of teasing are more impactful on future self esteem levels gives the clinician specific time periods during their client's past to explore. Being able to identify and work through impactful events in one's past sooner would reduce the overall number of counseling session needed to deal with their psychological distress.

Future Research

Future research on teasing can be conducted in a laboratory setting where children could participate in contrived teasing experiences where they are exposed to ambiguous, pro-social, and anti-social teasing events. Their reaction to this event could be compared to their teasing history to determine if they were more inclined to rate the experiences as negative or positive. The use of a more controlled environment would reduce the influence of outside factors and eliminate the reliability on a subject's memory for reporting a teasing event.

Future research should also focus its efforts to investigate how to lessen the negative effects of anti-social teasing for children during elementary and middle school, and subsequently develop training programs to help them negate the harmful effects of being teased. Special care should be taken to ensure that the subjects' culture be taken into consideration for any and all interventions developed. Because the interpretation of teasing is so subjective, an intervention that may work well for one child may not be effective for another child whose cultural climate is very different.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Age: _____ Gender: **Male** **Female**

Ethnic Identity: **Caucasian** **African American**
Hispanic/Latino **Asian**
Native American **Other:** _____

Number of Siblings: _____

Bothers: _____

Sisters: _____

Birth Order: **1st** **2nd** **3rd** **4th** **5th** **Other:** _____

Mother's Occupation: _____

Father's Occupation: _____

Approximate Household Income:

< \$30,000 \$30,001 - \$50,000 \$50,001 - \$75,000

\$75,001 - \$100,000 \$100,001 - 150,000 > \$150,001

APPENDIX B

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle **SA**. If you agree with the statement, circle **A**. If you disagree, circle **D**. If you strongly disagree, circle **SD**.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

SA A D SD

2. At times, I think I am no good at all.

SA A D SD

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

SA A D SD

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

SA A D SD

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

SA A D SD

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

SA A D SD

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

SA A D SD

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

SA A D SD

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

SA A D SD

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

SA A D SD

APPENDIX C

FAMILY & PEER TEASING SCALE (ELEMENTARY SCHOOL)

Think back to when you were just starting out in school (1st – 5th grades; 5-11 years old). Take a moment and daydream back to those times. Think about who your teachers were at this time, making friends in school, and learning new things. Think about what was happening in your family at this time. Now think about when you were teased during this time by other kids either in or out of school and by members of your family. Respond to the following questions by picking the number that most fits how you recall feeling at that time.

1. How much did you feel other kids teased you?

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	A lot
-------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	--------------

2. How much did you feel members of your family teased you?

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	A lot
-------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	--------------

3. What was the teasing from the other kids like?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
-----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

4. What was the teasing from members of your family like?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
-----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

5. Compared to other kids you knew, how much did you think you were teased?

I was not teased	0	1	2	3	4	A lot more
-------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------------

6. Compared to other families, how much did you think you were teased?

I was not teased	0	1	2	3	4	A lot more
-------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------------

7. How did the teasing from other kids make you feel?

Happy	1	2	3	4	5	Hurt
--------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

8. How did the teasing from members of your family make you feel?

Happy	1	2	3	4	5	Hurt
--------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

What was the main thing you were teased about by other kids at that time?

What was the main thing you were teased about by your family at that time?

Were you able to visualize this time in your life? YES NO

FAMILY & PEER TEASING SCALE (MIDDLE SCHOOL)

Now think back to when you were in middle school (6th – 8th grade; 11-14 years old). Take a moment and daydream back to those times. Think about who your teachers were at this time, making friends in school, and learning new things. Think about what was happening in your family at this time. Now think about when you were teased during this time by other kids either in or out of school and by members of your family. Respond to the following questions by picking the number that most fits how you recall feeling at that time.

1. How much did you feel other kids teased you?

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	A lot
-------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	--------------

2. How much did you feel members of your family teased you?

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	A lot
-------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	--------------

3. What was the teasing from the other kids like?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
-----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

4. What was the teasing from members of your family like?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
-----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

5. Compared to other kids you knew, how much did you think you were teased?

I was not teased	0	1	2	3	4	A lot more
-------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------------

6. Compared to other families, how much did you think you were teased?

I was not teased	0	1	2	3	4	A lot more
-------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------------

7. How did the teasing from other kids make you feel?

Happy	1	2	3	4	5	Hurt
--------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

8. How did the teasing from members of your family make you feel?

Happy	1	2	3	4	5	Hurt
--------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

What was the main thing you were teased about by other kids at that time?

What was the main thing you were teased about by your family at that time?

Were you able to visualize this time in your life? YES NO

FAMILY & PEER TEASING SCALE (HIGH SCHOOL)

This time think about when you were in high school (9th – 12th grade; 14-18 years old). Take a moment and daydream back to those times. Think about who your teachers were at this time, making friends in school, and learning new things. Think about what was happening in your family at this time. Now think about when you were teased during this time by peers either in or out of school and by members of your family. Respond to the following questions by picking the number that most fits how you recall feeling at that time.

1. How much did you feel your peers teased you?

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	A lot
-------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	--------------

2. How much did you feel members of your family teased you?

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	A lot
-------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	--------------

3. What was the teasing from your peers like?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
-----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

4. What was the teasing from members of your family like?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
-----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

5. Compared to your peers, how much did you think you were teased?

I was not teased	0	1	2	3	4	A lot more
-------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------------

6. Compared to other families, how much did you think you were teased?

I was not teased	0	1	2	3	4	A lot more
-------------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------------

7. How did the teasing from your peers make you feel?

Happy	1	2	3	4	5	Hurt
--------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

8. How did the teasing from members of your family make you feel?

Happy	1	2	3	4	5	Hurt
--------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-------------

What was the main thing you were teased about by your peers at that time?

What was the main thing you were teased about by your family at that time?

Were you able to visualize this time in your life? YES NO

APPENDIX D

PSS-FA

The statements that follow refer to feelings and experiences, which occur to most people at one time or another in their relationships with their families. For each statement there are three possible answers: Yes, No, Don't know. Please circle the answer you choose for each item.

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------------|--|
| Yes | No | Don't know | 1. My family gives me the moral support I need. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 2. I get good ideas about how to do things or to make things from my family. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 3. Most other people are closer to their family than I am. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 4. When I confide in the members of my family who are closest to me, I get the idea that it makes them uncomfortable. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 5. My family enjoys hearing about what I think. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 6. Members of my family share many of my interests. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 7. Certain members of my family come to me when they have problems or need advice. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 8. I rely on my family for emotional support. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 9. There is a member of my family I could go to if I were just feeling down, without feeling funny about it later. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 10. My family and I are very open about what we think about things. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 11. My family is sensitive to my personal needs. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 12. Members of my family come to me for emotional support. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 13. Members of my family are good at helping me solve problems. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 14. I have a deep sharing relationship with a number of members of my family. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 15. Members of my family get good ideas about how to do things or make things from me. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 16. When I confide in members of my family, it makes me uncomfortable. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 17. Members of my family seek me out for companionship. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 18. I think that my family feels that I'm good at helping them solve problems. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 19. I don't have a relationship with a member of my family that is as close as other people's relationships with family members. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 20. I wish my family were much different. |

APPENDIX E

PSS-FR

The statements that follow refer to feelings and experiences, which occur to most people at one time or another in their relationship with friends. For each statement there are three possible answers: Yes, No, Don't know. Please circle the answer you choose for each item.

- | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------------|-----|---|
| Yes | No | Don't know | 1. | My friends give me the moral support I need. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 2. | Most other people are closer to their friends than I am. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 3. | My friends enjoy hearing about what I think. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 4. | I rely on my friends for emotional support. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 5. | If I felt that one or more of my friends were upset with me, I'd just keep it to myself. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 6. | I feel that I'm on the fringe in my circle of friends. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 7. | There is a friend I could go to if I were just feeling down, without feeling funny about it later. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 8. | I get good ideas about how to do things or to make things from my friends. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 9. | My friends and I are very open about what we think about things. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 10. | My friends are sensitive to my personal needs. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 11. | My friends come to me for emotional support. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 12. | My friends are good at helping me solve problems. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 13. | I have a deep sharing relationship with a number of friends. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 14. | My friends get good ideas about how to do things or make things for me. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 15. | When I confide in friends, it makes me feel uncomfortable. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 16. | My friends seek me out for companionship. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 17. | I think that my friends feel that I'm good at helping them solve problems. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 18. | I don't have a relationship with a friend that is as intimate as other people's relationships with friends. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 19. | I've recently gotten a good idea about how to do something from a friend. |
| Yes | No | Don't know | 20. | I wish my friends were much different. |

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