TEASING: A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to address the factors which influence children's perceptions of ambiguous teasing comments. Specifically, the influences of one's relationship with the teaser (friend versus nonfriend) and one's evaluations of teasing topic (positive versus negative self-evaluation) were hypothesized to affect perceptions. Sixty-nine children ages 8 through 13 were asked to respond to hypothetical teasing scenarios in which an ambiguous teasing comment was made by friends (or nonfriends) about some aspect of appearance on a topic of great (or little) importance to the teasee. Responses to scenarios included perceptions of intent and suggested behavioural responses to teasing. Emotional responses to teasing were also considered. Results demonstrated that teasing from friends was perceived as more benign than from nonfriends. Also, teasing from friends was responded to more negatively than teasing from nonfriends. Valence of self-evaluation did not significantly affect perceptions of intent; however, scenarios including positive self-evaluations tended to be responded to in a more positive way. In addition, participants had mainly negative emotional responses to being teased. Interpretations of these findings and directions for future research are also discussed.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The development of social relationships is very important to a child's general well-being. How effective a child may be within the social world is largely due to the child's experiences in close relationships (Hartup, 1989). According to Hartup (1985), there are three main functions of relationships. First of all, social interactions provide a forum in which basic competencies, like understanding others' perspectives and learning about the world in general, develop. Second, relationships can serve as emotional and cognitive resources which provide the individual with the security to explore the world around them. Finally, early relationships serve as a basis upon which subsequent relationships can be modelled.

The first relationships that a child normally has are with parents. These attachments are vertical in nature because parents have more knowledge and social power than their children (Hartup, 1989). From interactions with parents, children learn basic social skills which can later be applied during peer interactions. Peer relationships are viewed as being horizontal because participants in these exchanges possess equal social power (Hartup, 1989). In the past, researchers have tended to overlook the relationships that children have with their peers by focusing primarily on the parent-child relationship. However, as Rubin and Coplan (1992) point out, children today are exposed to peer societies at earlier ages than in previous years. This is largely due to single- and dual-income families placing their children in early child care
settings. Because of the large amount of time that children spend within the peer culture, it is essential that we learn the consequences of positive, negative, and impoverished peer interactions.

Other researchers have minimized the influence of parents and stress the importance of the peer group in child development (Harris, 1995). As well, findings from Asendorpf and his colleagues (Asendorpf, 1990; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993) discuss the importance of peer relationships for both social and cognitive development. Peers help to define what behaviours are appropriate and acceptable in the social context. Not only can peers be models for these behaviours, but they can also reinforce appropriate behaviours and punish inappropriate ones (Rubin & Mills, 1988). Also, the skills that children learn through interactions with peers facilitate the creation and maintenance of peer relationships (Rubin & Coplan, 1992).

Since interactions with peers can be seen as very important to normal development, it can be hypothesized that children who fail to interact effectively with peers do not receive the benefits associated with these interactions (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). In fact, some children may experience negative interactions with peers. Of particular concern are children who experience some form of victimization from peers. As Hoover and Hazler (1991) note, if children are victimized by peers on a regular basis (defined as being “teased or attacked” (p.212)), they may learn that school is a hostile place. Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) go further to say that if children see school as a frightening place to be, they may ruminate on their negative
Teasing experiences, and may detach themselves and fail to benefit from their schooling. When concerned about their own safety, it makes sense that victimized children might have difficulty concentrating on their school work. In fact, some researchers have stressed the long term impact of victimization from peers (e.g., Hodges & Perry, 1999). These researchers found that victimization by peers was predictive of future internalizing difficulties and rejection by peers. As such, victimization by peers can be viewed as a risk factor for child development.

Hoover and Hazler (1991) describe teasing as a form of victimization. In addition, some researchers have included teasing among the categories of bullying and intimidation that require intervention (Roberts & Coursol, 1996). Similarly, in his definition of bullying, Olweus (1993) includes those who tease others repeatedly over time as bullies. Conversely, Olweus defines victims (among other things) as being the targets of this repeated teasing. When children are asked to identify difficult social encounters, children in grades 1, 3, and 5 list teasing or being singled out from the crowd as a major concern (Feldman & Dodge, 1987). Thus, it would seem that teasing is an unpleasant, aggressive form of interaction.

However, some researchers allude to the less unpleasant and more playful aspects of teasing. For example, Oliver and colleagues (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994) found that males and females from grades 7 to 12 supported the contention that the majority of teasing episodes they witnessed in peers were of a playful nature. In addition, Scambler, Harris, and Milich (1997) noted that over half of the children
between the ages 8 and 11 that they interviewed admitted to teasing friends. These findings suggest that teasing can also be of a benign or even playful nature.

How does one make sense of these conflicting perspectives on teasing? It seems apparent that teasing can either be perceived as good or bad. In order to help prevent further victimization, it is therefore important to identify the factors that help distinguish between good or bad teasing. By learning to recognize both "bad" and "good" teasing, children may be able to learn appropriate ways to avoid victimization and to participate in positive interactions with peers. As such, studying teasing has a very valuable purpose.

Literature Review

What is Teasing?

Children's perceptions. What are common manifestations of teasing behaviour as described by children? Shapiro, Baumeister and Kessler (1991) asked students in grades 3, 5, and 8 to give examples of teasing episodes. The most common type of teasing reported was verbal. Verbal teasing included poking fun at someone, calling someone funny names, laughing at someone, and less common responses such as making sarcastic remarks, asking humorous questions, pretending something is true that is not, gross imitation, and plays on words. However, nonverbal teasing was also reported, including physical actions (e.g., gesturing), playing games (e.g., "keep away"), and putting a sign on someone's back. Thus, teasing can take both verbal and nonverbal forms.
Children also appear to be aware of the conflicting nature of a tease. For example, Scambler and colleagues (Scambler et al., 1997) found that almost half of the definitions for teasing given by the 8- to 11-year-olds in this study were of a negative nature. However, when these researchers asked these same children why they teased, 31% of participants stated that teasing was done for fun. This finding may be reflective of differences in giver versus receiver perceptions.

Another group of researchers found that evaluations of teasing were related to teasing history. Male and female students from grades 7 to 12 tended to agree that the majority of teasing episodes they witnessed in peers were of a playful nature (Oliver et al., 1994). Shapiro, Baumeister, and Kessler (1987) found that 18% of students in third grade and 32% of students in fifth grade recognized that teasing could be both positive and negative. Positive aspects of teasing included the humour associated with teasing and the function of teasing as communicating information to the teasee. Therefore, across ages, it appears that children are aware, at least to some degree, of both playful/humorous and aggressive components of teasing.

The findings from Warm (1997) suggest that there may be a developmental trend with regard to children’s conceptualizations of teasing as positive or negative. Although Warm found that the majority of children across ages defined teasing in terms of playful and aggressive aspects, similar to definitions that researchers have endorsed (see following section), this researcher also found some variation in children’s definitions as they grow older. Younger elementary school students (i.e., students in
grade 1) tend to view teasing as a method for inflicting injury or pain onto another (e.g., tripping another person, spitting on someone). The practice of defining teasing as an injury-causing act declines in grade 3, and continues to decline into the mid- to late-adolescent years. It is interesting to note, however, that a small percentage of students (less than 10%), even up to grade 11, continue to see teasing in an entirely physically aggressive act.

Warm (1997) also found that as physically aggressive definitions of teasing decline, definitions that incorporate the use of insults increase, peaking in grade 6. While still defining teasing as an aggressive act, the method for expressing that aggression changes. Warm suggested that this developmental shift may be reflective of the fact that as children age, their ability to use and manipulate language improves. Thus, the use of physically aggressive tactics declines as children's verbal skills improve. Although Warm's study provides some interesting insights into how children perceive teasing, these results suggest that children do not have a clear conception of this phenomenon, given the variability in children's responses. The variability in children's conceptions of teasing may reflect more than just a developmental shift in cognitive and language facility; it may also reflect the inherently ambiguous nature of teasing (Alberts, Kellar-Guenther, & Corman, 1996; Shapiro et al., 1991).

Research definitions. As Scambler and colleagues (1997) note, although many of us may be able to identify teasing when we see it, defining this process in a research or operationalized sense is much more demanding. Beyond recognizing that teasing is
Teasing

a form of communication between people (Shapiro et al., 1991), there is variation in how teasing has been defined in the extant literature. Some researchers (e.g., Roberts & Coursol, 1996) identified teasing as a form of bullying and/or aggression. Although instances of repeated teasing over time may be classified as bullying (Olweus, 1993), throughout the extant literature individual teasing episodes are not typically classified as bullying. In defining teasing, most researchers stress not only the hostile or aggressive elements of this process, but the playful or humorous elements as well (Alberts et al., 1996; Drew, 1987; Pawluk, 1989; Shapiro et al.; Warm, 1997). There are, however, some researchers who deny humorous aspects of the teasing process, particularly for children. For example, from their review of the extant literature on teasing, Scambler et al. (1997) state that “childhood teasing is more closely affiliated with taunting, verbal abuse, and insults than is adulthood teasing” (p.5).

In addition to aggression and humour, a number of researchers stress the inclusion of a third factor necessary to define a teasing episode: ambiguity. According to some researchers (Alberts et al., 1996; Shapiro et al., 1991), it is the conflict between the humour and aggression that causes the ambiguity of a tease. Shapiro et al. go further to say that this ambiguity is caused by an incongruity between what the teaser actually says and what he or she truly feels about the person being teased.

In summary, there is some variability in how both researchers and children define teasing, but three elements seem critical. For the purpose of this investigation then, teasing was defined as an act which reflects three distinct elements: aggression,
Teasing

humour, and ambiguity (Alberts et al., 1996; Shapiro et al., 1991). It has been suggested that it is the conflict between humour and aggression which causes the ambiguity of a tease (Shapiro et al.). As will be seen in subsequent sections of this paper, the ambiguity of teasing may be the reason that a tease is open to interpretation as malicious or benign (Shapiro et al.). Thus, although some children interpret a tease to be primarily positive or negative, all three elements of humour, aggression, and ambiguity are typically present when a tease is enacted.

Prevalence of Teasing

Most of us have probably had an experience with teasing at some point in our lives. What do children say when asked about the prevalence of teasing? According to a group of children ages 7 and 11, 96% of children at both ages acknowledged that teasing happens (Mooney, Creeer, & Blatchford, 1991). However, among this same group of children, only 67% and 66% of respondents, respectively, noted that they are victims of teasing and 50% and 57% of respondents, respectively, noted that they are instigators. Thus, it appears that although teasing appears to be a common occurrence in the lives of elementary school-aged children, not all children are directly involved in the teasing process, as teasers and/or as the targets of teasing.

Factors Influencing Teasing

Given the seemingly pervasive nature of teasing, it is interesting to examine the factors that contribute to being either a victim or instigator of teasing. From a review of the extant literature, there is evidence to suggest that the likelihood that a child will be
a victim or perpetrator of teasing depends on the nature of social relationships, including sociometric status and the relationship between teaser and teasing, as well as age and gender.

With regard to being a perpetrator of teasing, Shapiro and colleagues (Shapiro et al., 1991) note that having status within a peer group appears to be related to teasing. Among the eighth graders that these researchers polled, over half reported that aggressive children tended to tease. However, almost a quarter of these respondents also listed popular students as having a tendency to tease. Interestingly, other research has shown that children's perceptions of the malicious versus benign nature of teasing is related to sociometric status. For example, Trecroce (1985) found that among children in grades 3 to 6, more popular and sociable children were seen as teasing for fun, whereas aggressive children were seen as teasing with cruel intent. Further, students viewed unpopular children as having difficulty determining when teasing was no longer appropriate. Unpopular peers were reported to tease excessively and cruelly (as compared to average or popular children), and their efforts were not seen as humorous. It is not clear from the Trecroce results whether this link between social status and positive versus negative nature of teasing reflects biased perceptions of popularity versus unpopularity or whether this reflects truth (i.e., popular children tease, but it is friendly).

In terms of being teased, Shapiro et al. (1991) found that among eighth grade students, victims of teasing tended to have little power within the peer group. However,
interestingly enough, 12% of these same eighth graders admitted that victims of teasing have positive qualities. Trecroce (1985) found that among students in grades 3 to 6, popular, sociable children were seen as being teased infrequently, whereas aggressive and withdrawn children were seen as being frequent targets for teasing and reacted in inappropriate ways to being teased (e.g., by getting angry or by crying).

Additional findings reveal that teasing is related to the relationship between the teaser and teasee. As Scambler et al. (1997) note, over half of the children between the ages 8 and 11 that they interviewed admitted to teasing friends. Teasing classmates, family, or disliked individuals was also found to be common. As such, one can conclude that, at least according to the children in this study, teasers can be friends, classmates, family, or enemies.

Further findings with regard to targets of teasing reveal that children's experiences with being teased vary as a function of age and gender. In one study, Mooney et al. (1991) found that among 7-year-olds, girls were more likely to admit to being teased. However, at age 11, this trend changes such that more boys than girls admit to being teased. Although these findings are only based on one study, these results do suggest there may be some age and gender differences with respect to being teased.

In summary, the results suggest that teasing is a prevalent form of interaction. Participation in teasing as either a victim or perpetrator appears to be influenced by a number of factors including sociometric status, relationships with others, and gender.
Of particular interest for the current study was the influence of the relationship between teaser and teasee on children's perceptions of, and reactions to, teasing. The influence of age and gender on teasing interactions was also addressed.

What Are People Teased About?

The most frequently cited topic of teasing, across child and adult populations, is appearance (Alberts et al., 1996; Mooney et al., 1991; Scambler et al., 1997; Shapiro et al., 1991; Warm, 1997). In fact, some authors have developed scales to assess people's experiences with being teased about their appearance (e.g., Physical Appearance Related Teasing Scale; Thompson, Fabian, Moulton, Dunn, & Altabe, 1991). Appearance is a broad category which includes such topics as weight, attire, and hairstyle. With regard to appearance, researchers have found some sex differences in teasing experiences. Specifically, Mooney et al. and Shapiro et al. found that among pre-adolescents and adolescents, girls were more likely than boys to list appearance as a teasing topic area. Thus, appearance is a very salient focus of teasing, especially for pre-adolescent and adolescent girls.

Other teasing topics for children include physical performance/athletic ability, intellectual performance, family, hygiene, race or nationality, fears, psychological difficulties, odd behaviour, name, or being a "goody-goody" (Mooney et al., 1991; Scambler et al., 1997; Shapiro et al., 1991). As children get older, the topics of teasing change as the issues facing these children change. For example, among students in grade 8, teasing about sexual matters and sexuality was found to emerge, a topic area
not mentioned at younger grades (Shapiro et al.). In addition, sexuality and identity are included as topic areas identified in teasing episodes among adults (Alberts et al., 1996).

In summary, with regard to teasing topic, across ages teasing about appearance appears to be most common. Other teasing involves a huge range of topics, with evidence that some topics (e.g., sexuality) emerge later in adolescence and adulthood. On the basis of the extant literature, and given the familiarity most children have with teasing about appearance, the current study used teasing about aspects of appearance in order to investigate childrens' perceptions of, and reactions to, teasing.

**Why Do People Tease?**

According to researchers (Abrahams, 1962; Drew, 1987; Mooney et al., 1991; Oliver et al., 1994; Pawluk, 1989; Scambler et al., 1997; Shapiro et al., 1987, 1991; Trecroce, 1985), the act of teasing serves a number of functions and most people are able to provide a number of reasons why they tease others. However, some individuals are not even aware of reasons for teasing others. For example, Mooney et al. (1991) found that among children aged 7 and 11 years, a small percentage (13%) of children could not give a reason why children tease. Among reasons that individuals were able to give for teasing behaviour, responses ranged from internal goals on the part of the teaser to more broad goals that incorporated both teaser and teasee within a larger social group, as described below.
The reasons some people give for teasing others are related to the teaser’s internal feelings. Shapiro et al. (1991) found that among children in grades 3, 5, and 8, 8% of participants reported teasing others just because they were in a bad mood. Thus, teasing does not necessarily result from any interaction between teaser and teasee, but may be merely the outcome of the teaser’s mood.

On a more positive note, a number of researchers have found that many participants tease because it is enjoyable. Across studies, children and adolescents ranging from grade 2 to grade 12 consistently identify the “fun” aspects of teasing as reasons that they and others tease (Mooney et al., 1991; Oliver et al., 1994; Scambler et al., 1997; Shapiro et al., 1987, 1991). Further evidence from Trecroce (1985) reveals this practice may be related to sociometric status. Trecroce found that children in grades 3 to 6 nominated popular and sociable children as teasing other children for enjoyment. Therefore, enjoyment and fun appear to be consistent factors in why children tease others.

Teasing may also be a part of a social interaction. About one fifth of the participants in the Mooney et al. (1991) study of children ages 7 and 11 years admitted to teasing in order to provoke others. In addition, reciprocating a tease as a way of responding to being teased was the explanation given by over one third of the children in some studies for teasing others (Scambler et al., 1997; Shapiro et al., 1991). An earlier study by Abrahams (1962) documented the use of reciprocal teasing, called “playing the dozens,” as a way of developing verbal skills and establishing social
dominance among African-American males. Abrahams described this reciprocal teasing as a series of teases, one after the other, in which the participants try and "out-tease" each other (the more creative and cutting the tease, the more effective the teaser). Today it is called "dissing." Therefore, teasing may merely provide a forum for interacting with other people.

Teasing is sometimes used to make the teasee aware of group norms. As Shapiro and colleagues (1991) note, teasing is often used to inform the teasee that they have deviated from what is typically expected of that particular peer group, be it in appearance, behaviour, or any number of attributes. By alerting the teasee to their deviation, conformity to group norms is encouraged. This process can have the power to either include the target of teasing by encouraging them to conform, or to exclude the target by informing them that they have not met up to a group standard. Interestingly, Shapiro et al. found that 10% of children in grades 3, 5, and 8 report teasing in a group. Thus, the group can provide a forum for informing individuals about group norms. In addition, exhibiting one's knowledge of group norms through teasing may be a method whereby a group member (i.e., the teaser) can gain status within the group. For example, Mooney et al. (1991) found that, among children aged 7 and 11 years, enhancement of teaser's status was endorsed as a reason for teasing by 10.2% of participants. The power of the peer group in teasing cannot be understated.

Finally, teasing may function as a way of defining a relationship. Many authors suggest that teasing may reflect the closeness of a relationship. For example, Drew
(1987) suggests that closer individuals are more likely to tease one another. Being able to tease another person may show how comfortable one is with that person. In a somewhat related vein, teasing may also reflect a desire for a closer relationship. For example, among eighth-grade students, teasing a member of the opposite sex that one likes was cited as a common purpose for teasing (Shapiro et al., 1991). In this sense, teasing provides an index of how much you are attracted to a given person.

Pawluk (1989) goes further to say that, while you may only tease people with whom you feel comfortable, the fact that someone is teasing you may affect how you interpret being teased. In other words, a person may assume humorous teasing (or malicious intent) depending on one’s relationship with the teaser. Thus, teasing may reflect a positive or a negative relationship. For example, when children are asked who they tease, a small percentage (12%) of third, fifth, and eighth graders report teasing children that they dislike (Shapiro et al., 1991). This finding may reflect an inclusion/exclusion purpose of teasing (in terms of group norms, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph), defining the actual relationship between teaser and teasee. Nevertheless, the relationship between teaser and teasee (whether positive or negative) may affect the potential for teasing as well as the interpretation of teasing. Given that a tease can be either positive or negative, the recipient must interpret the teasing depending on his/her knowledge of the relationship.

The findings reviewed here emphasize the fact that teasing can be seen and interpreted either positively or negatively. Positive teasing sometimes reflects the
enjoyment of the teasing activity, positive interactions or relationships with others, the expression of group norms, inclusion and/or affection. Negative teasing may reflect a bad mood, the expression of group norms, peer exclusion and/or disliking. These differences in interpretations of teasing experiences were of interest in the current study. Given the sometimes ambiguous nature of teasing, it is essential to further investigate the factors that influence our perceptions of the teasing process.

Responses to Teasing

According to Pawluk (1989), an individual has four options when teased. First, the individual can reject the tease. This would involve correcting the teaser, or somehow addressing the fact that the teaser is in error. As Pawluk notes, this may be the worst response option, as the teasee may interpret the teaser’s comment as more serious than intended. Second, the individual can ignore the tease. Third, the individual can accept the tease (e.g., by laughing along with the teaser). Finally, in the case of being teased in front of other people, the teasee can wait for clues from the audience to determine an appropriate response.

A number of studies on teasing behaviour have examined typical responses to being teased. Mooney et al. (1991) found that 7- and 11-year-old children reported striking back, either verbally or physically, as the most common response to teasing. Other popular responses included ignoring the tease or letting the teacher know about the teasing episode. Similarly, in another study by Warm (1997), 47% of children and adolescents reported retaliating as a common response to teasing comments.
However, less than a third of this original number of participants (19%) supported the contention that retaliation was the most appropriate response to teasing. Ignoring was cited as the most appropriate reaction to teasing, as endorsed by 72% of participants. However, only half of the participants admitted to actually using ignoring in response to their real-life teasing interactions. Similarly, in a study of individuals in grade 8, Shapiro et al. (1991) found that responses to teasing included retaliation (e.g., fighting, verbal response, further teasing), ignoring, informing an adult or someone in a position of power about the teasing, or going along with the tease by laughing. Thus, the extant research suggests that, when asked, children and adolescents describe their responses to teasing as falling in three of the four categories postulated by Pawluk (1989): ignoring, accepting, or rejecting the tease through retaliation. Students do not spontaneously suggest waiting to see how the audience reacts.

One of the difficulties with these studies is their reliance on retrospective self-reports that may not provide an accurate account of actual teasing responses. As an alternative, Scambler and colleagues (1997) used an interesting methodology to study children's responses to teasing. These researchers presented students between the ages of 8 and 11 with videotaped teasing interactions in which they manipulated the teasee's response to being teased. The teasees responded in one of three ways: a) by ignoring the teaser; b) by responding in a hostile manner; or c) by responding in a humorous manner. Children rated teasees who responded with humour to be more successful than either those who ignored or those who responded in a hostile manner.
Moreover, the way in which the teasees responded affected participants' evaluations of the children in the videotaped interactions. Specifically, when teasees responded with humour, the teasees were judged as more personable and the teasers as more popular, as compared to other experimental conditions. Thus, in both ignore and hostile response conditions, the teasees were judged as less personable and the teasers as less popular, when compared to the humorous response condition. Further, there were some age differences with regard to popularity ratings. While older participants did not rate the teasers differently in terms of popularity across conditions, younger participants rated teasers who responded with humour as more popular than those who responded by ignoring or in a hostile manner. In addition, race appears to impact these ratings of popularity as well. Across conditions, African-American participants rated teasers as more popular than Caucasian participants.

Although the study by Scambler et al. (1997) provided some interesting insights into the teasing process, there are some limitations of this study. The main difficulty with this study is that it had participants judge an interaction that had already happened. Part of what defines this teasing interaction lies in the interpretation of the ambiguous teasing comment. Individuals in a teasing interaction do not have the benefit of standing outside the interaction and judging the tease once it has been responded to; they are forced to interpret the teaser’s comment and to judge it for intent while within the interaction, especially if they are the recipient. Thus, assessing how people interpret the behaviours of others could provide valuable insight into the
dynamics of teasing interactions. Research and theory on social information processing offers some useful insights in this regard.

Social Information Processing

Dodge and colleagues (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge & Price, 1994) identified a series of cognitive processing steps that one must go through in social interactions. These steps include 1) attending to environmental cues; 2) accurately interpreting social cues; 3) evaluating possible behaviour responses; 4) deciding on a behavioural response; and, 5) enacting this response. As noted by Feldman and Dodge (1987), children who have difficulty at any one of these steps may respond with less competent social behaviour. Misinterpreting social cues represents a difficulty with step 2 of this model. For example, children who are more aggressive tend to interpret ambiguous social interactions as malicious rather than benign (Steinberg & Dodge, 1983). As a result, these aggressive children may respond aggressively given their negative interpretations of this event (Crick & Dodge).

Other researchers (e.g., Cirino & Beck, 1991; Dorsch & Keane, 1994; Fabes, Eisenberg, Smith, & Murphy, 1996; Hymel, 1986) specifically addressed the factors affecting how one interprets others' behaviour. These researchers examined how such factors as social status (Cirino & Beck; Hymel), context (Dorsch & Keane), and relationship (Fabes et al.; Hymel) affect interpretations. For example, Hymel found that children's perceptions of peers' intentions depended on the relationship between the individuals involved, as reflected in reported attribution biases. Specifically, children
viewed behaviour (including within a teasing scenario) by liked peers in a positive light. For example, children were more likely to interpret being laughed at for dropping papers by a liked peer as an effort to cheer them up, whereas the same behaviour by a disliked peer was more likely to be viewed as teasing or mean (Hymel, personal communication, December 1998). In addition, children were more likely to view disliked peer’s negative behaviour to be stable (and likely to occur again), while positive behaviour was viewed as unstable.

With regard to the teasing literature, few researchers have examined the factors that influence how people interpret being teased and whether biases such as those demonstrated by Hymel (1986) figure into this interpretation. This represents a huge gap in our understanding of the teasing process. For example, Alberts et al. (1996) stated that “we do not currently understand the process by which individuals interpret a given act of teasing as either playful or aggressive” (p.339). It appears that it is the ambiguous nature of teasing which may lead to difficulties in interpretation of intent (Shapiro et al., 1991). Consistent with Dodge’s social information processing model, Alberts (1992) suggested that how one perceives a tease (whether as playful or as aggressive) will influence how one reacts to being teased. As such, understanding those factors that guide perceptions becomes crucial.

A few researchers and theorists have examined the impact of various factors in interpreting teasing. One of these factors includes paralinguistic cues such as laughter, vocal emphasis, and overstatements (Alberts, 1992; Alberts et al., 1996; Drew, 1987).
Teasing

For example, a tease may be interpreted as playful (as compared to a direct insult) if it is accompanied with laughter. Self cues (internal motivations/thoughts specific to the teasee) have also been identified as influencing interpretations of teasing (Alberts et al.). An example of a self cue would be if a person referred to his/her lack of humour as the reason he/she did not find a tease to be humorous. Another factor that appears to be important in interpreting teasing is the context of the tease. Certain contexts may lend themselves more to teasing than others (Alberts, 1992; Pawluk, 1989). In this regard, Alberts (1992) differentiated two components of context: 1) social context; and 2) communicative context. For example, with regard to social context, an informal party with friends may be a more appropriate context for teasing than church. The communicative context refers to the mood or style of the conversation in which the tease is situated. For example, a tease may be more easily interpreted as humorous within a series of humorous comments, as opposed to within a series of serious comments.

One major factor that seems particularly important in how a tease is interpreted and responded to is the relationship between the teasee and the teaser. The relationship between teaser and teasee may be one form of background knowledge which influences the teasee's perceptions of being teased (Alberts, 1992; Alberts et al., 1996). One's relationship with the teaser is frequently alluded to as having an influence on whether the teasing is seen as cruel or playful (Shapiro et al., 1991; Trecroce, 1985). Teasing between friends is seen to be a marker of affection, but researchers
have also noted the possibility that, by teasing another, you may be attempting to identify a relationship as friendly (Pawluk, 1989). As noted previously, Scambler et al. (1997) found that children who witnessed a humorous response from the teasee viewed the teasee as friendly and the teaser as popular. Conversely, children who witnessed a hostile or ignore response from the teasee rated the teasee as less friendly and the teaser as less popular.

Hymel (1986) included relationships with peers as a factor influencing children's perceptions of behaviour. Other factors investigated included age, social status of the perceiver, and quality of behaviour. Hymel found that children tended to have a positive bias in interpretations of behaviours of liked peers. Conversely, behaviours of disliked peers were viewed negatively. Although Hymel incorporated a teasing episode among the vignettes in her study on attribution bias, further research has not examined the role of relationship in perceptions of teasing intent. The current study specifically addresses the role that the relationship between teaser and teasee has on affecting teasee's interpretations of teasing. Based on the literature reviewed here, one would expect that teasing from a liked peer would be seen as more benign than teasing from a disliked peer.

Second, the topic of the tease and the value placed on this topic by the recipient of teasing may influence the perceptions of teasing. When Alberts et al. (1996) asked undergraduates to recall a teasing episode and their emotional response to this teasing, they did not find that emotional responses varied as a function of teasing topic.
As noted earlier, Alberts et al. used retrospective reports, which may not be very valid, and studied undergraduates' interpretations of the teasing process. As such, the findings of Alberts et al. may be weak and of little relevance to the current study (especially as children's responses to teasing are of primary interest). However, as Alberts and other researchers have noted (Alberts, 1992; Alberts et al.; Shapiro et al., 1991; Thompson et al., 1991), it may not merely be the topic of teasing that influences perceptions of teasing, but the value that one places on this topic. For example, if the topic is in a particularly sensitive or highly valued area for the recipient of teasing, this may lead the recipient to view the tease as more hurtful and less playful. No studies have explicitly examined the relationship between value of topic area and perceptions of intent. As such, the proposed study will address this relationship as it pertains to children.

In summary, a number of factors have been cited in the literature as possibly contributing to how a teasee interprets being teased including paralinguistic cues, self cues, context of the tease, relationship between teasee and teaser, and topic of the tease and the value placed on this topic. However, very few of these factors have actually been empirically evaluated with regard to teasing among children. Accordingly, the present study seeks to evaluate the degree to which two different aspects of the teasing situation influence children's interpretations and responses to peer teasing: relationship between teasee and teaser, topic of the tease, and the value placed on this topic by the teasee.
Statement of the Problem and Overview of the Study

Research on teasing has suggested that interpretations of teasing as positive or negative, malicious or benign, play an important role in the teasing process. Given the typically ambiguous nature of a tease, it is often difficult for tease recipients to fully understand teaser intentions, although such intentions may be inferred. To date, little research has actually examined the influence of various factors that contribute to a given tease being perceived as benign or malicious, and some of this research has been conducted with adult populations. In this study, I argue that a crucial component of understanding the teasing process is recognizing the impact of two theoretically important factors that may contribute to how a child perceives being teased. Two factors, the nature of the relationship between teaser and teasee and the positive versus negative value the recipient places on the topic of teasing, were hypothesized to exert considerable influence on how children interpret and respond to teasing. Although not a primary focus, age and gender effects were also considered. To test this hypothesis, children in grades four through seven were asked to respond to hypothetical teasing scenarios regarding various aspects of appearance. Scenarios were manipulated with regard to the person performing the teasing (i.e., friend versus nonfriend) and value the recipient placed on the topic of teasing (i.e., positive versus negative). Outcome measures included children's perceptions of teaser intent and suggested behavioural responses to teasing (in terms of friendliness and assertiveness...
Teasing

Friendship and importance of teasing topic may have separate and/or interactive effects on children's perceptions of intent in teasing experiences. For example, while teasing from a friend may generally be seen as more benign than teasing from a nonfriend, if the teasing is in an area of value to the target, teasing from a friend may actually be seen as more malicious. Research by Tesser and colleagues suggests that when an individual (A) compares themselves to another (B), two factors become important: 1) the value of the performance; and, 2) the relationship between A and B (Tesser & Collins, 1988; Tesser, Millar, & Moore, 1988). If person A values the area of competition and is outperformed by person B, A has two choices. Person A can devalue the competition, or can devalue the friendship with person B in order to continue to evaluate the self in a positive light. Applying this model to teasing, it is possible that if child A is teased by child B (a friend) in an area that child A values, child A has two options. Child A can either reduce the importance of the area, or child A can devalue the friendship with child B. Thus, by examining the interactive effects of friendship and topic importance, the current study provides an extension of the Tesser model of self-evaluation maintenance as it pertains to teasing.

Thus, the current study employed a 2 X 2 (liking by self-evaluation) repeated measures design. Grade and gender were also included as within-subjects variables. Dependent measures included perceptions of intent and behavioural responses to
teasing. Descriptive data on children's emotional responses to teasing were also considered. The goal of the current study was to answer the following questions:

1) **Are students' perceptions of being teased influenced by who is doing the teasing?** Consistent with previous research (e.g., Hymel, 1986), it was hypothesized that students would perceive teasing done by classmates that are liked as more benign than teasing done by classmates that are not liked. This perception was believed to also influence how children feel about being teased by friends versus nonfriends and their suggested responses to teasing episodes, with the expectation that teasing from friends would be both interpreted and responded to more positively than teasing from nonfriends.

2) **Does the topic of teasing influence students' reactions?** Research has shown that children are most likely to be teased about appearance (Alberts et al., 1996; Mooney et al., 1991; Scambler et al., 1997; Shapiro et al., 1991; Warm, 1997). However, evaluation of a tease about one's appearance may be influenced by the importance placed on that aspect of their appearance. For example, theorists have drawn a link between one's values in a given area and how these values affect one's perceptions (Alberts, 1992; Alberts et al.; Shapiro et al.; Thompson et al., 1991).

For the current study, the influence of the value or importance of the teasing topic on children's interpretations and responses to teasing was assessed. The experimental scenarios were manipulated so that the recipient had a negative or positive evaluation of his/her appearance. As such, value was operationalized as either
positive or negative self-evaluation. It was assumed that if a child evaluated an aspect of their appearance in a positive light, they were likely to place greater value on this aspect, especially when teased (e.g., being teased about something you feel good about may be seen as more of a threat to one's self-esteem). Conversely, if a child evaluated an aspect of their appearance in a negative light, they were likely to place less value on this aspect when teased by peers (e.g., being teased about something you know is negative may be less of a threat to one's self-esteem).

It was hypothesized that being teased in an area that is highly valued would lead the recipient to view the teasing as more malicious. Conversely, being teased in an area that is of little importance, or of low value, would lead the recipient to view the teasing as more benign. It follows then, that teasing about an area of importance would be both interpreted and responded to more negatively than teasing about an area of little importance.

3) Are there combined effects between relationship with teaser and topic of teasing that influence a child's perception of being teased? Given research that has demonstrated that one's perceptions of an external event are influenced by both the value one places on that event and the relationship one has with another person associated with the event (e.g., Tesser & Collins, 1988; Tesser et al., 1988), it was hypothesized that there would be an interaction between the topic of teasing and children's relationships in their perception of being teased. While it was expected that children would generally view teasing from a friend as more benign than teasing from a
Teasing

nonfriend, this relationship may be influenced by the importance the target child places on the topic area. Specifically, being teased by a friend in a highly sensitive area was expected to be seen as more malicious than the same act done by a nonfriend based on the assumption that friends do not tease each other about sensitive topics. Again, these perceptions were believed to influence participants' feelings about and responses to the teasing episodes.
Participants

The children included in the present study were part of a longitudinal study on social skills. In the initial phase of the study (as described below), participants included 110 children in grades four through seven, ranging in age from 8 to 13 ($M = 10.47$), attending a parochial school in a large city in British Columbia, Canada. Of these, only 68 children participated in the second interview phase of the study based on the criteria described below. The children came from predominantly lower to middle-class neighbourhoods that included various ethnicities. Parental consent and child assent were required of all children participating in this study. Consent forms are presented in Appendix A. Participation was voluntary.

Procedure

Participants were involved in one group testing and one individual testing session held on two separate occasions. During initial group testing, students were asked to rate their degree of liking for same-sex classmates (sociometric testing). On the basis of data obtained from the sociometric testing, a subsample of students were selected to participate in individual interviews during which they were asked to respond to several different hypothetical teasing scenarios. An outline of the methodology and measures follows.
Group testing. Sociometric assessments were administered during a single group testing session as part of a battery of measures for a larger study on children's social relationships. Testing was done in the students' classrooms at a time determined by the classroom teacher. Sociometric questionnaires were administered by graduate student research assistants (not the principal investigator) who were blind as to the purposes of this study. This was done in order to minimize the apparent connections between the two testing sessions of the study.

Following standard sociometric testing procedures (Hymel, Vaillancourt, McDougall, & Renshaw, in press), students were given a list of same-sex classmates and were asked to rate each student in response to the question, “Do you like to be with (student name)?” (see Appendix B). Responses were indicated on a five-point Likert Scale (“YES!”, “yes”, “sometimes”, “no”, and “NO!”). This format was believed to be easy for children to follow and has been used by other researchers (e.g., Hymel, LeMare, Ditner, & Woody, 1998).

Only same-sex sociometric ratings were used because one of the main topics of interest for this study was friendship. Cross-sex friendships or ratings were not considered for two reasons. First, there was some concern that the use of cross-sex ratings might identify possible boyfriend or girlfriend pairings, especially given the fact that the participants were of pre-adolescent/adolescent age. In addition, researchers have proposed that teasing a member of the opposite sex may be a subtle way to
indicate an attraction (Shapiro et al, 1991). As dating relationships were not the focus of the current study, same-sex ratings appeared most appropriate.

Based on the sociometric ratings given to classmates, liked, disliked, and average students were identified for each participant. Specifically, liked students were operationally defined as those students that the participant claimed to like to be with the most (i.e., receiving ratings of “YES!” or “yes”, on the sociometric scale). Conversely, disliked students were defined as those students that the participant claimed to like to be with the least (i.e., receiving ratings of “NO!” or “no”). Average students were defined as those students that the participant claimed to like to be with “sometimes”.

Of the 110 students who participated in the initial group testing, only 69 students participated in the individual interviews (one of these remaining 69 participants was dropped from analyses due to missing data). Forty-one participants were dropped because they did not identify at least two students from their class that they liked most and at least two students from their class that they liked least. Like-least ratings were particularly difficult for some students in the present sample, perhaps because all of these students attended a parochial school that strongly encouraged acceptance of everyone, making participants hesitant to acknowledge that they did not like to be with some students in their class.

In order to evaluate age differences in subsequent analyses, these remaining 68 participants were divided into younger and older groups according to grade placement.
The older group consisted of students in grades 6 and 7, whereas the younger group consisted of students in grades 4 and 5. A breakdown of students by grade and gender is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

**Study Participants: Distribution by Gender and Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade Four</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Five</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Six</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Seven</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Individual interviews.** Following the group testing, each student was interviewed on an individual basis by the principal investigator. Participants listened to nine hypothetical scenarios, presented individually, and gave information about their interpretation of the behaviour of the target child in the scenario, how this behaviour made the participant feel, and how the participant would respond to this behaviour. The interview format for each scenario is presented in Appendix C.

Each participant listened to four experimental scenarios and five filler scenarios during the interview session. All scenarios were created by the examiner for the purposes of this study. Each of the experimental scenarios dealt with some aspect of appearance: haircut, hairstyle, shoes, clothes. These were chosen because they were
Teasing seen as potentially changeable aspects of appearance, thus limiting the chance that participants would experience persistent bad feelings about the hypothetical teases. The teaser in the experimental scenarios was identified as a classmate that the participant had previously identified in group testing as either liked or disliked. Experimental scenarios were counterbalanced across participants so that each participant responded to two scenarios involving teasing by liked classmates and two scenarios involving teasing by disliked classmates. Using actual students that the participants knew and liked or disliked provided greater external validity with regard to the hypothetical scenarios (Waas & Honer, 1990). In addition, the experimental scenarios were manipulated so that the participant had a negative or positive evaluation of his/her appearance. This level of evaluation was also counterbalanced across participants so that each participant responded to two experimental scenarios involving positive self-evaluation and two scenarios involving negative self-evaluation. Thus, the current study followed a 2 X 2 (liking X self-evaluation) repeated measures design, such that each participant was included in each of the experimental conditions. For the experimental scenarios, the target child (friend or nonfriend) made an ambiguous teasing comment about the participant. As noted earlier, the extant research suggests that it is the ambiguous nature of teasing which may lead to difficulties in interpretation of intent (Shapiro et al., 1991). As such, every effort was made to ensure that teasing comments in experimental scenarios were ambiguous.
The “filler” scenarios were used as distractors and were not analysed for the present study. These filler scenarios involved a target child for whom the participant gave an average liking rating (as identified in previous group testing). Topic areas for filler scenarios included typical classroom events (class project, field trip, leading the class, helping a younger child, learning a new game) and were counterbalanced across participants. The filler scenarios involved the target child complimenting the participant. See Appendix D for hypothetical scenarios.

The format for the interview sessions involved a filler scenario followed by an experimental (teasing) scenario followed by a filler scenario. As such, the interview sessions began and ended with filler (complimentary) scenarios, ensuring that the participants entered and left the interviews on a positive note.

Following each scenario, the participant was asked three questions in order to determine a) how the participant interpreted the behaviour of the target peer, b) how the teasing episode made the participant feel, and c) what the participant would do in response to the tease. For the first question, “Why would ___________ (Like most/like least/average peer) do that?”, the participant used a 10-point wheel to indicate his/her perception of the target child’s intentions. Participants could move the wheels to select 1 to 10 “pie slices”, reflecting a 10 point Likert-type scale that indicated the degree to which the teaser (protagonist) was seen as either being mean or cheering them up. Descriptors on the wheel included “to be mean” and “to cheer me up.”
For the second question, "How would that make you feel?", students responded by selecting one of five labelled drawings of faces expressing different emotional states to determine participants’ reactions (see Appendix E). Response options for this question included "Mad", "Happy", "Sad", "Neutral", and "Embarrassed".

Third, participants were asked, "What would you do if (Like most/like least/average peer) did that to you?". This question was open-ended and allowed the participants to explain how they would respond to the target peer in the scenario. These responses were later coded by two independent raters in terms of both Friendliness and Assertiveness on separate 5-point Likert scales (1 = "Very Unfriendly" and 5 = "Very Friendly" or 1 = "Very Unassertive" and 5 = "Very Assertive") following procedures developed by Renshaw and Asher (1983). Inter-rater reliability was calculated using all responses of 14 children randomly sampled from the four different grade groupings. Hoyt’s coefficient was used to compute the reliability for both Assertiveness, $\text{Hoyt}(1,155) = 0.95$, and Friendliness ratings, $\text{Hoyt}(1,155) = 0.97$, with high inter-rater reliability indicated in both cases. Disagreements between raters were resolved through discussion.
CHAPTER THREE

Results

Overview of Design

Children's perceptions of teasing were evaluated using hypothetical teasing scenarios. The primary independent variables included liking (friend versus nonfriend) and self-evaluation (positive versus negative). Other independent variables included gender (male versus female) and grade (older versus younger). Dependent measures included perceptions of intent, emotional responses to teasing, and behavioural responses to teasing (friendliness and assertiveness of responses). Given the open-ended nature of the behavioural response to teasing question and the fact that participants provided a varying number of responses to this question, ratings for level of friendliness and assertiveness of responses were averaged for each scenario.

Preliminary Analyses

A number of preliminary analyses were conducted in order to determine whether participant responses varied as a function of scenario (i.e., haircut, hairstyle, jacket, shoes). Analyses were conducted using each of the dependent variables: perceptions of intent, emotional responses to teasing, and behavioural responses to teasing.

Perceptions of Intent and Behavioural Responses

A series of repeated measures ANOVAs were used to examine differences between scenarios in terms of perceptions of intent, friendliness of behavioural responses, and assertiveness of behavioural responses to teasing. The results from
these analyses indicated no significant differences between scenarios for perceptions of intent, $F(3, 195) = 0.50$, $p = .68$, friendliness of responses, $F(3, 201) = 1.25$, $p = .29$, and assertiveness of responses, $F(3, 201) = .76$, $p = .52$. Thus, participant perceptions of teaser intent and behavioural responses to teasing did not vary significantly as a function of scenario.

**Emotional responses to teasing**

A series of Chi Square tests of independence were conducted in order to examine differences between scenarios. The results from these analyses revealed no significant differences in emotional reactions to teasing for all emotions except "Embarrassed", $\chi^2(3, N = 58) = 9.45$, $p > .05$. For the Hairstyle scenario, participants were more likely than expected to report feeling embarrassed, while participants in the jacket scenario were less likely than expected to report feeling embarrassed.

**Summary**

As analyses for the most part did not suggest differences between scenarios in terms of scenario topic (i.e., hairstyle, haircut, jacket, shoes), differentiations based on scenario topic were not included in further analyses. As such, subsequent analyses were conducted using groupings based on the four main independent variables (age, gender, friend versus nonfriend, positive versus negative self-evaluation).

**Main Analyses**

This study used a within-subjects design for the primary independent variables including liking (friend versus nonfriend) and self-evaluation (positive versus negative).
Effects of between-subjects variables including gender (male versus female) and grade (older versus younger) were also examined.

Perceptions of Intent

To examine the main and interactive effects of the perception of intent variable, a 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 (gender X grade X liking X self-evaluation) repeated measures ANOVA was used, with gender and grade as between subjects variables and liking and self-evaluation as within subjects factors. Results from this analysis are presented in Table 2.

For the between subjects factor, results revealed a significant main effect for grade, $F(1, 64) = 5.01, p < .05$, indicating that older participants ($M = 2.75, SD = 0.32$) were more likely to view teaser's intentions as benign as compared to younger participants ($M = 1.72, SD = 0.33$). No significant main or interactive effects of gender were found.

For the within-subjects factors, results revealed a significant main effect for liking, $F(1, 64) = 10.12, p < .01$, indicating that teasing from friends ($M = 2.76, SD = 0.30$) was viewed as more benign as compared to teasing from nonfriends ($M = 1.70, SD = 0.26$). Effects of self-evaluation on perceptions of intent were found to be non-significant, $F(1, 64) = 1.00, p = .32$.

No further interactions were found to be significant, although a grade X liking X self-evaluation approached significance, $F(1, 64) = 3.73, p = .06$. Relevant means for this interaction are presented in Table 3. As noted previously, regardless of condition,
Table 2  
Analysis of Variance for Perceptions of Intent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade (Gr)</td>
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<td>5.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Ge)</td>
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<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(13.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking (L)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Gr</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Ge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Gr X Ge</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE X Ge</td>
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<tr>
<td>L X SE X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.73</td>
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Teasing

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L X SE X Ge</td>
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<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X SE X Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (L X SE)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(3.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.

*p < .05, **p < .01

older participants tended to perceive teasing as more benign than younger participants. In addition, teasing from friends tended to be perceived as more benign than teasing from nonfriends. However, these effects were affected by the level of self-evaluation. In teasing episodes involving a friend, participants in the positive self-evaluation condition tended to view intent of the teaser in more extreme terms. For example, older participants in the positive self-evaluation condition tended to perceive the teasing as more benign (as compared to older participants in the negative self-evaluation condition) and younger participants in the positive self-evaluation condition tended to perceive the teasing as more malicious (as compared to younger participants in the negative self-evaluation condition). This effect was not as extreme in the nonfriend conditions.

Behavioural Responses to Teasing

Behavioural responses were evaluated in terms of friendliness and assertiveness. Given the open-ended nature of this question and the fact that participants provided a varying number of responses to this question, ratings for level of friendliness and assertiveness of responses were averaged for each scenario. To
Table 3

Marginal Means for Perception of Intent Interaction (Grade X Liking X Self-Evaluation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Younger</th>
<th>Older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>1.68 (0.52)</td>
<td>3.87 (0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>2.48 (0.47)</td>
<td>2.97 (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfriend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>1.03 (0.44)</td>
<td>2.00 (0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>1.36 (0.45)</td>
<td>2.51 (0.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent standard error.

evaluate the main and interactive effects of the independent variables, two separate repeated measures ANOVAs were used.

Friendliness. To examine the main and interactive effects of the friendliness of behavioural responses to teasing variable, a 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 (gender X grade X liking X self-evaluation) repeated measures ANOVA was used, with gender and grade as between subjects variables and liking and self-evaluation as within subjects factors. ANOVA was used. Results from this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Initial analyses examined the effects of both grade and gender on friendliness of behavioural responses to teasing. For these between subjects factors, main effects for grade and gender were found to be nonsignificant. However, results revealed a
Table 4

Analysis of Variance for Friendliness of Behavioural Response Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade (Gr)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Ge)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.51*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(0.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking (L)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (L)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation (SE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.64***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE X Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (SE)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X SE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X SE X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teasing

| L X SE X Ge | 1 | 0.73 |
| L X SE X Gr X Ge | 1 | 1.25 |
| Error (L X SE) | 64 | (0.11) |

*Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.*

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Significant grade by gender interaction, F(1, 64) = 4.51, p < .05. Older males (M = 3.01, SD = .071) suggested more friendly behavioural responses as compared to younger males (M = 2.95, SD = .098). Conversely, older females (M = 2.77, SD = .102) suggested less friendly behavioural responses as compared to younger females (M = 3.09, SD = .084).

For the within-subjects factors, results revealed a significant main effect for liking, F(1, 64) = 7.63, p < .01. Participants suggested less friendly behavioural responses to teasing from friends, (M = 2.89, SD = .048) as opposed to nonfriends (M = 3.02, SD = 0.053). Results also revealed a significant main effect for self-evaluation, F(1, 64) = 15.64, p < .01. Participants suggested more friendly behavioural responses to teasing in the positive self-evaluation condition, (M = 3.05, SD = .045) as compared to the negative self-evaluation condition (M = 2.87, SD = 0.055). No interactions were found to be significant.

Assertiveness. To examine the main and interactive effects of the assertiveness of behavioural responses to teasing variable, a 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 (gender X grade X liking X self-evaluation) repeated measures ANOVA was used, with gender and grade as
between subjects variables and liking and self-evaluation as within subjects factors. Results from this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Initial analyses examined the effects of both grade and gender on assertiveness of behavioural responses to teasing. No significant main or interactive effects for grade or gender were found.

For the within-subjects factors, results revealed a significant main effect for liking, $F(1,64) = 6.02, p < .05$. Participants suggested more assertive behavioural responses to teasing from friends ($M = 3.05, SD = .070$), as opposed to nonfriends ($M = 2.90, SD = 0.086$). Results also revealed a significant main effect for self-evaluation, $F(1,67) = 14.68, p < .001$. Participants suggested less assertive behavioural responses to teasing in the positive self-evaluation condition, ($M = 2.85, SD = .084$) as compared to the negative self-evaluation condition ($M = 3.11, SD = 0.079$). No interactions were found to be significant.

Correlations Between Perceptions of Intent and Behavioural Responses

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to examine relations between participants' perceptions of intent (positive or negative) and suggested behavioural responses to teasing episodes in terms of degree of friendliness or assertiveness of response.

In the Friend/Positive Self-Evaluation condition, perceptions of intent were significantly and negatively related to friendliness of suggested behavioural responses,
Table 5

Analysis of Variance for Assertiveness of Behavioural Response Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade (Gr)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Ge)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(1.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking (L)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (L)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation (SE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.68***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE X Gr X Ge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (SE)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X SE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L X SE X Gr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teasing

L X SE X Ge  1  0.01
L X SE X Gr X Ge  1  0.04
Error (L X SE)  64  (0.29)

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

$r(69) = -0.36, p < .01$, and significantly and positively related to assertiveness of suggested behavioural responses, $r(69) = 0.25, p < .05$. Thus, in this condition, the more benign the perception of teaser's intent, the more likely the participants were to suggest less friendly and more assertive behavioural responses to the teasing episode.

Relations between perceptions of intent and quality of behavioural responses were not found to be significant for the remaining three conditions (Friend/Negative Self-Evaluation, Nonfriend/Positive Self-Evaluation, Nonfriend/Negative Self-Evaluation). However, a negative correlation between perceptions of intent and friendliness of behavioural response ratings in the Nonfriend/Positive Self-Evaluation condition approached significance, $r(69) = -0.23, p = .05$. These correlations can be found in Table 6.

Emotional Responses to Teasing

As participants' emotional responses to teasing were not of primary interest in the current study, these data were examined descriptively. With regard to group membership, younger participants tended to endorse feeling “mad” (43%) in response to scenarios. “Happy” (4%) was the least likely emotion to be endorsed by younger
Table 6

**Correlations Between Perceptions of Intent and Behavioural Responses for Different Experimental Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Intent</th>
<th>Behavioural Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Pos. Eval.</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Neg. Eval.</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfriend/Pos. Eval.</td>
<td>-.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfriend/Neg. Eval.</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01

participants. In contrast, older participants tended to endorse all feelings, except "happy" (3%) in response to scenarios. (Table 7).

In terms of gender differences, both males and females were most likely to endorse feeling "mad" (30% and 33%, respectively) in response to scenarios. Across genders, both males and females were also least likely to endorse feeling "happy" in response to scenarios (Table 7).

Across scenarios, the most popular response option endorsed by participants was that they would feel "mad" in response to teasing scenarios including positive self-evaluation (both friends, 30% of participants, and nonfriends, 43% of participants) or
Table 7

Proportions of Participants Endorsing Different Emotional Responses by Grade and by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion*</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* M = Mad, H = Happy, S = Sad, N = Neutral, E = Embarrassed

negative self-evaluation (nonfriends, 35% of participants). Teasing by a friend including negative self-evaluation was most likely to result in reports of feeling "embarrassed" (32% of participants). Across all scenarios, participants were least likely to endorse feeling "happy" in response to a tease (Table 8).
Table 8

Proportions of Participants Endorsing Different Emotional Responses by Condition
(Friend versus Nonfriend, Positive versus Negative Self-Evaluation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friend</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonfriend</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* M = Mad, H = Happy, S = Sad, N = Neutral, E = Embarrassed
CHAPTER FOUR
Discussion

Summary of Findings

The results from this study provide some insights into children's perceptions of, and reactions to, teasing. In terms of how children perceive teasing, age and liking appear to affect perceptions of teaser intent. As hypothesized, and consistent with previous research (e.g., Hymel, 1986), teasing from friends was seen as more benign than teasing from nonfriends. Therefore, when faced with an ambiguous teasing comment, participants were willing to interpret this comment more positively for friends. However, nonfriends did not receive the same latitude, as teasing comments were seen as being more cruel in intent. As such, this research provides further support for the attribution biases we make for both those we like and those we dislike. It is noteworthy that, in general, children tended to perceive teasing as more malicious than benign. Teasing from friends was seen as just slightly less malicious, as compared to that from nonfriends.

With regard to behavioural responses to teasing, participants' responses differed as a function of their relationship with the teaser. Participants suggested less friendly and more assertive responses to teases from friends as compared to nonfriends. Thus, while children are more likely to give friends the "benefit of the doubt" regarding their perceptions of teaser intent, their suggested behavioural responses to the teasing episodes were of a more negative nature for friends, as compared to
nonfriends. There are several plausible explanations for this finding. First, responding in a negative fashion to friends may provide a subtle message regarding the tease (i.e., "I did not like your little joke."). Second, it may be more appropriate to behave in negative ways with friends as compared to nonfriends. Children may have a certain degree of latitude regarding acceptable behaviours within the context of a friendship that they do not have with children they dislike. Alternately, children may behave more negatively towards friends as opposed to nonfriends as a result of expectations of appropriate behaviour within the context of a friendship. Teasing may be seen as violating the more stringent expectations for friendship relationships, causing children to react more negatively to teasing from friends, as opposed to nonfriends.

Results from this study did not support research hypotheses that valence of self-evaluation (positive versus negative) would affect perceptions of teaser intent. However, self-evaluation was related to children's behavioural responses to teasing. Participants suggested more friendly and less assertive behavioural responses in the positive self-evaluation condition as compared to the negative self-evaluation condition. Thus, when children evaluated some aspect of their appearance positively, they tended to respond to teases in a more positive way. Conversely, when children evaluated some aspect of their appearance negatively, they tended to respond to teases in a more negative way.

While self-evaluation did not have an effect on teasee's perceptions of intent when considered on its own, it did have an effect when considering the influences of
liking and age. The interaction between these three variables (liking, grade, and self-evaluation), although not significant, does provide some potentially interesting information about the teasing process. For teasing from friends, children who felt positively about some aspect of their appearance tended to perceive teaser intent in more extreme terms as compared to children who felt negatively about some aspect of their appearance. When they felt positively about the topic of the tease (e.g., new haircut), older participants perceived the teasing to be more benign, whereas younger participants perceived the teasing to be quite malicious. This finding was not as extreme in the nonfriend condition. Older children may have a better understanding than younger children that teasing is benign. As such, when teased by a friend about something they feel good about, older students may be more likely to excuse the teaser’s action (e.g., “Jim just did that to kid around, he couldn’t possibly mean it.”). Conversely, younger children have a greater focus on the negative aspects of teasing (e.g., Warm, 1997). As such, being teased about something they feel positively about by a friend may be viewed in a more negative light, as a more severe attack on their self-esteem.

The links between children’s perceptions of intent and suggested behavioural responses to teasing were also investigated in the current study. Perceptions of intent were only found to be related to behavioural responses in the Friend/Positive Self-Evaluation condition. The more benign the teaser’s intent was perceived to be, the more likely the participants were to suggest less friendly and more assertive responses
to the teasing episode. Thus, even though a child may view teasing from a friend as benign when they feel positively about some aspect of their appearance, they tended to respond in more negative ways. As mentioned previously, responding in a negative fashion to friends may provide a subtle message regarding the tease (i.e., “I did not like your little joke.”) and it may be more acceptable to behave in negative ways with friends as compared to nonfriends. In addition, children may respond more negatively to teasing from friends as compared to nonfriends because teasing is seen as a violation of friendship expectations. However, teasing by friends about something they feel positively about may cause children to respond even more negatively. While children may recognize that the tease was not cruelly intended and may want to give their friends the benefit of the doubt, by behaving negatively they may be letting their friends know that that was unacceptable to be teased about something they felt positively about.

Although not of primary interest in the current study, there were some effects of age and gender in response to the teasing scenarios. In terms of perceptions of intent, there were differences in children’s perceptions on the basis of age. Older participants were more likely to view the teaser’s intentions as benign as compared to younger participants. Thus, with age it appears that children become more attuned to the more humorous, or benign, aspects of teasing. Regarding behavioural responses to teasing, age and gender were only found to affect the friendliness of responses. Older boys
suggested more friendly responses as compared to younger boys, while the reverse was found for girls.

Finally, regarding children's emotional responses to teasing, for the most part, children claimed they would feel mad. For one condition, children were most likely to report feeling embarrassed when they felt negatively about something and were teased by a friend. Perhaps feeling badly about some aspect of one's appearance and then being teased by a friend about this very aspect makes a child even more self-conscious, causing them to feel embarrassment. Across situations, an overwhelming minority of children claimed they felt happy in response to a tease. Thus, the children in this study, for the most part, had negative emotional responses to the teasing scenarios. So while children can attest to the fun aspects of teasing (e.g., Scambler et al., 1997), and they see teasing as being playful (e.g., Oliver et al., 1994), the results from this study suggest that when actually teased themselves, children tend to feel badly.

Implications of Findings

The results from the current study have implications regarding theory, research, and practice. First of all, the current findings did not provide support for Tesser's model of self-evaluation maintenance (Tesser & Collins, 1988; Tesser et al., 1988), at least in the ways originally hypothesized. No significant interactions were found between friendship and topic importance, as hypothesized. It was thought that if child A is teased by child B (a friend) in an area that child A values, child A could either reduce
the importance of the area or could devalue the friendship with child B. On one hand, it is possible that methodological difficulties such as the way in which topic importance was operationalized, the size of the current sample, or the way in which scenarios were presented prevented a significant result from being found. For example, regarding scenario presentation, participants did not have the option of outwardly devaluing the importance of topic area (e.g., saying, "I didn't really like the new jacket, anyways") nor the option of outwardly devaluing the friendship with the teaser (e.g., saying, "I don't really like (the teaser) anyways."). On the other hand, support for this model may have been given although not in the ways originally hypothesized. For example, teasing by a friend in the positive self-evaluation condition was linked with responding negatively to the tease. Perhaps this is one method whereby participants were able to devalue their friendship with the teaser.

The current study was also useful in that it provided empirical support for children's perceptions of, and reactions to, teasing. Many of the studies published on teasing have provided descriptive information on teasing through the use of retrospective reports (e.g., Alberts et al., 1996; Shapiro et al., 1987, 1991; Warm, 1997) or have provided third party evaluations of teasing (e.g., Scambler et al., 1997, Trecroce, 1985). One of the main benefits of this study, given the importance of a teasee's interpretation of an ambiguous comment, is that it specifically assessed children's interpretations of, and reactions to, actual teasing episodes using peers that the participant knew.
Finally, further research must be conducted into the area of children's perceptions of teasing before this can be put into practice. While this study does provide some valuable information regarding children's perspectives on teasing, further study is needed to better understand the teasing process. Only at that point will it be possible to develop interventions to help children distinguish between "good" and "bad" teasing and to learn appropriate ways to deal with teasing situations.

**Limitations of Study**

While the current study did have some robust findings regarding children's perceptions of, and responses to, teasing, this study did have some limitations. One limitation concerns the generalizability of the results of this study. While the use of hypothetical teasing vignettes was worthwhile, as it allowed manipulation of the primary independent variables (liking and self-evaluation), it is difficult to determine whether the findings from this study would hold true in a more naturalistic teasing situation. In addition, only certain components of teasing were addressed. For example, researchers have stressed the importance of such factors as sociometric status (Cirino & Beck, 1991; Hymel, 1986; Trecroce, 1985), paralinguistic cues (e.g., Alberts, 1992; Alberts et al., 1996; Drew, 1987) and context (Alberts; Dorsch & Keane, 1994; Pawluk, 1989) in influencing people's perceptions. Given the absence of such factors, the hypothetical teasing vignettes may have created a somewhat artificial teasing environment.
The population used for the current study also had some drawbacks regarding the generalizability of these results. First, the students in this experiment came from a single parochial school. As such, these findings may not be generalizable to other populations of students in grades four through seven. Further, the environment of the school (i.e., strongly encouraging acceptance of all students) and the fact that these students had been a part of a longitudinal project on social skills may have led to certain demand characteristics. Participants may have responded in a more positive manner as a result of these environmental influences.

Another limitation of the current study concerns measurement issues. First, the sample size was much smaller than originally planned. As such, it is possible that certain relationships were not found to be significant or significant relationships were not as robust as they could have been had the sample size been larger.

Second, the way that certain variables were operationalized may have limited their effects. For example, the value or importance placed on the teasing topic was operationalized as either positive or negative self-evaluation. While from a theoretical perspective this operationalization makes sense, the children who participated in this study may not have made the same connections between value and self-evaluation as this researcher.

As with any study, the current study has some limitations. By addressing these limitations, and improving upon the methodology of this study, future research projects
will hopefully provide more insight into the teasing process and children's perspectives on teasing.

Future Directions

Given that, to date, teasing is an area which has not been studied extensively, there are many different elements of the teasing process which still require investigation.

While the results from the current study provide some evidence regarding children's perspectives on teasing for children in grades four through seven, it would be interesting to investigate whether these same findings hold true for different ages. For example, Warm (1997) investigated children's changing perspectives on teasing as they get older. In the current study, children had a tendency to identify teaser intent as more benign with increasing age. It is possible, then, that this trajectory would continue. By later adolescence and adulthood, people may have a more clear understanding that teasing is not intended to be mean, and at some points is just meant to be funny. These changing perspectives may, in turn, influence people's reactions to teasing episodes.

In addition, while the current study imposed value through the positive and negative self-evaluations experienced by the participants of the study, it would be interesting to examine children's responses to teasing based on areas that they actually value. Children might have more extreme responses based on teasing about areas that they take great or little pride in. While this would provide information based on more reality-based perceptions of value, this methodology clearly has some ethical
considerations (i.e., is it ethical to tease someone, even experimentally, about something that is valued considerably?).

Other important influences on teasing that require investigation include context and teasing history. As mentioned previously, certain contexts may lend themselves more to teasing than others (Pawluk, 1989). Alberts (1992) further differentiates context into two components: 1) social context; and 2) communicative context. Both of these components may have influences on the teasing process. However, little research has actually examined the influence of context on teasing interactions. For example, it is possible that if situated within a series of teases or within more playful interchanges, teasing might be seen as more benign and subsequent reactions to teasing might be more positive. Conversely, teasing within a more serious context might be seen as more malicious and subsequent reactions to teasing might be more negative.

Teasing history may also influence perceptions of, and reactions to, teasing. As suggested by Georgesen et al. (Georgesen, Harris, Milich, & Bosko-Young, 1999), early experiences with teasing will likely influence reactions to teasing episodes later in life. If past teasing experiences were of a playful or fun nature, a person will likely react in a more positive way to future teasing episodes. Conversely, if past teasing experiences were of a hurtful or malicious nature, a person will likely react in a more negative way to future teasing episodes. As such, this may be an important variable to consider in future research on teasing, as teasing history may influence interpretations of the teasing process and methods for dealing with teasing situations.
Another topic that requires further investigation is the importance of sociometric status of the individuals involved in teasing. Shapiro et al. (1991) found that aggressive children and popular children were seen as more likely to tease. Further, Trecroce (1985) found that popular children were seen as teasing for fun, whereas aggressive children were seen as teasing to be mean. In contrast, victims of teasing were identified as children with little power within the peer group (Shapiro et al.; Trecroce). In addition, these less powerful victims of teasing were also seen to react inappropriately to teasing (Trecroce). While these studies provide some insights into the influences of sociometric status, they used retrospective or self-report methodologies to ascertain these influences. Future research that examines the direct influence of sociometric status on teasing episodes would be informative. To this end, a study by Keltner and colleagues (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998) investigated actual teasing exchanges between high and low status fraternity members.

Finally, as mentioned previously, the use of hypothetical teasing vignettes in the current study may have created a somewhat artificial teasing environment. While the use of hypothetical teasing vignettes was worthwhile, as it allowed manipulation of the primary independent variables (liking and self-evaluation), it is difficult to determine whether the findings from this study would hold true in a more naturalistic teasing situation. As such, investigations of teasing in more natural settings or more natural exchanges would be beneficial. An example of one such study is that by Keltner et al.
These researchers examined actual teasing exchanges between fraternity members or between romantic couples.

Conclusions

The results from this study provide some insights into the teasing process among elementary school age children. Specifically, the influences of liking and self-evaluation on children's perceptions of, and reactions to, teasing episodes were examined. As such, this study is a valuable addition to the existing research in this area, especially in the examination of children's responses to actual teasing episodes by children that they knew. However, teasing is an area requiring considerably more study. Only through further investigation can we obtain a better and more thorough understanding of this complex process.
REFERENCES


Teasing


Consent: I understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he/she may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences or impact on his/her school work. I also understand that I may keep the enclosed copy of this sheet for my own records. My decision regarding this study is indicated below:

_____ Yes, my son/daughter has my permission to participate.
_____ No, my son/daughter does not have my permission to participate.

Son or Daughter's Name ____________________________ Grade __________

Parent or Guardian Signature ____________________________ Date _________
APPENDIX B

HOW MUCH DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH YOUR CLASSMATES?

FOR THE NEXT QUESTIONNAIRE, WE WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LIKE TO BE WITH OTHER STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS. ON THE NEXT PAGE THERE IS A LIST OF STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS. BOYS WILL ONLY GET A LIST OF BOYS IN THE CLASS, AND GIRLS WILL ONLY GET A LIST OF GIRLS IN THE CLASS. READ EACH NAME AND DECIDE HOW MUCH YOU LIKE TO BE WITH EACH OF THESE STUDENTS.

MARK THE BIG "YES!" BOX IF YOU REALLY LIKE TO BE WITH THAT STUDENT.

MARK THE LITTLE "yes" BOX IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU SORT OF LIKE TO BE WITH THAT STUDENT.

MARK THE "sometimes" BOX IF YOU FEEL IN BETWEEN, THAT YOU SORT OF LIKE TO BE WITH THAT STUDENT, BUT SORT OF DO NOT LIKE TO BE WITH THAT STUDENT.

MARK THE LITTLE "no" BOX IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU SORT OF DO NOT LIKE TO BE WITH THAT STUDENT.

MARK THE BIG "NO!" BOX IF YOU REALLY DO NOT LIKE TO BE WITH THAT STUDENT.

REMEMBER, THERE ARE NO RIGHT ANSWERS OR WRONG ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, JUST WHAT YOU FEEL. PLEASE BE HONEST. YOUR ANSWERS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.
1. DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH STUDENT 1?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |

2. DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH STUDENT 2?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |

3. DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH STUDENT 3?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |

4. DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH STUDENT 4?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |

5. DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH STUDENT 5?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |

6. DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH STUDENT n?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |
INTERVIEW FORMAT FOR EACH SCENARIO

♦ SCENARIO

♦ FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. WHY WOULD ____________ (LIKE MOST/LIKE LEAST/AVERAGE) DO THAT? (Response wheel)

    TO BE MEAN?_____ or TO CHEER ME UP?_____

Each participant uses a 10-point wheel to indicate his/her perception of the target child's intentions. Participants spin the markers to rate the proportion of responsibility attributed to being a) mean, or b) nice, with 10 or 0 being the maximum and minimum number of points, respectively, attributed to each intention.

2. HOW WOULD THAT MAKE YOU FEEL? (With accompanying diagram - see next page)

    ____________ Mad
    ____________ Happy
    ____________ Sad
    ____________ Neutral
    ____________ Embarrassed

3. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF ____________ (LIKE MOST/LIKE LEAST/AVERAGE) DID THAT TO YOU? (Open-ended)

4. WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE WITH ____________ (LIKE MOST/LIKE LEAST/AVERAGE) AFTER THAT HAPPENED?

| YES! | yes | sometimes | no | NO! |
APPENDIX D
SCENARIOS

EXPERIMENTAL SCENARIOS:
- administered using same-sex students that the child likes most (LM) or likes least (LL), as rated in group testing

1) JACKET

a) Positive Self-Evaluation

You’re walking to school one day, wearing a new jacket that you just got for your birthday. You really like your new jacket, and think it looks really good. On the way to school, you meet ______ (LM/LL) in the school yard. ______ (LM/LL) says to you, “Where did you get the jacket?”, and starts to laugh.

b) Negative Self-Evaluation

You’re walking to school one day, wearing a new jacket that you just got for your birthday. You don’t really like your new jacket, and think it looks really bad. On the way to school, you meet ______ (LM/LL) in the school yard. ______ (LM/LL) says to you, “Where did you get the jacket?”, and starts to laugh.

2) SHOES

a) Positive Self-Evaluation

You wear a new pair of shoes to school that one of your parents got for you. You really like the new shoes, and think they look really good. You get to school and meet ______ (LM/LL) in class. ______ (LM/LL) says to you, “Where’d you find those shoes?”, and starts to laugh.

b) Negative Self Evaluation

You wear a new pair of shoes to school that one of your parents got for you. You don’t really like the new shoes, and think they look really bad. You get to school and meet ______ (LM/LL) in class. ______ (LM/LL) says to you, “Where’d you find those shoes?”, and starts to laugh.
3) HAIRCUT

a) Positive Self-Evaluation


b) Negative Self-Evaluation

You get a new haircut. You don’t really like the way it looks. You get to school and see __________ (LM/LL). __________ (LM/LL) says, “Who gave you that haircut?”, and starts to laugh.

4) HAIRSTYLE

a) Positive Self-Evaluation

You try out a new hairstyle for school. You really like how it looks, but have to leave quickly because you’ll be late for school. When you arrive at school, you see __________ (LM/LL). __________ (LM/LL) says to you, “What did you do to your hair?”, and starts to laugh.

b) Negative Self-Evaluation

You try out a new hairstyle for school. You really don’t like how it looks, but have to leave quickly because you’ll be late for school. When you arrive at school, you see __________ (LM/LL). __________ (LM/LL) says to you, “What did you do to your hair?”, and starts to laugh.

FILLER SCENARIOS:
- administered both before and after experimental scenarios, using sociometrically average students as targets.

1) FRIENDLINESS

During recess, you see a smaller child fall down and scrape his knee. The child begins to cry, so you go over and help him stand up, telling him that he’ll be okay. After recess, __________ comes up to you and says, “That was really nice of you to help that little kid.”
2) NEW GAME

During gym class, you learn a new game called Disk Zip. You like the game and think you played pretty well. After class, ________ comes up to you and says, "I hope I get to be on your team the next time we play Disk Zip. You played really well."

3) FIELD TRIP

Your teacher puts the class in pairs to go on a class field trip. He/she (teacher) says that you are paired up with ________. When you’re talking about the field trip, ________ says to you, "I’m glad we were paired up to go together."

4) CLASS PROJECT

In class, you present a project for Social Studies. ________ comes up to you after your presentation and says, "I really liked your presentation. The poster you made up is really cool."

5) LEADERSHIP

You are chosen to lead a class activity by your teacher. After you have finished, ________ says to you, "You did a great job. Our teacher must have picked you because he/she (teacher) knew you’d be such a good leader."
APPENDIX E

EMBARRASSED

NEUTRAL

SAD

HAPPY

MAD