2008

# Minimizing a Potential Threat: The Effects of Closeness on Perceptions of Teasing

Glen Gorman
*Wilfrid Laurier University*

# Canada

Minimizing a Potential Threat: The Effects of Closeness on Perceptions of Teasing

by

Glen Gorman

Bachelor of Arts, University of Waterloo, 2005

THESIS
Submitted to the department of Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Degree in Masters of Arts
Wilfrid Laurier University
2008

Abstract

Recent research has shown that when teasing occurs between two people, the intentions of the teaser are not always known, or appreciated by the recipient of the tease, thus creating a rift between the teaser and the target (Kruger et al., 2006). Targets of teasing tended to rate the tease and the intentions of the teaser more negatively than did the teaser. The purpose of the present research was to examine perceptions of teasing within the context of close relationships. Although teasing may be perceived as a threatening situation, members of a close interpersonal relationship may be motivated to lessen the negative impact of a tease from someone close to them. In Study 1, we asked participants to think about teasing in three different situations: teasing in general with no specific reference to themselves or someone they know, when they were the teaser, and when they were the target of a tease in a close relationship. Results showed that participants viewed teasing in general to be negative, but when asked about teasing in a close relationship they viewed it to be considerably more positive. In Study 2, we more closely examined the effects of closeness on the perceptions of teasing by randomly assigning participants to think about either a close other or a not close other. The findings suggest that relationship closeness seems to motivate participants to view teasing more positively from close others than from not close others.

Table of Contents

## List of Figures

# List of Appendices

Minimizing a Potential Threat: The Effects of Closeness on the Perceptions of Teasing

Interpersonal communication, even at its simplest, is never straightforward. It is fraught with ambiguities and misinterpretations, guided by personal biases of both the communicator and the interpreter. Teasing, with all of its pokes and jabs, is an exemplar of vagueness in human communication. Even when asked to define what teasing is, individuals can generate descriptions that span the entire spectrum, from having very negative interpersonal consequences (e.g., bullying) to having very positive ones (e.g., communicate caring) (Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001). Also, the recipient of a tease can never be quite sure of the teaser's intent. Even the best intentions of a teaser are sometimes unknown or unappreciated by the target, and may lead the target to view teasing more negatively than the teaser (Kruger, Gordon, & Kuban, 2006). Despite this potential for misunderstanding, teasing seems to occur quite frequently in everyday life. It is probably a relatively easy task for us to recall several instances in which we have teased someone or someone has teased us. If teasing is so laden with unclear meanings and has potential for negative consequences, why is it used so commonly in conversation? Furthermore, if the recipient of a tease typically perceives the tease as being negative, then how is it that relationships do not come to ruin due to the usage of such potentially hurtful communication? Do people interpret potentially threatening information differently depending on who is communicating the message? The current research was designed with this last question in mind. In this research, we explored the effects of relationship closeness on the perceptions of teasing.

*Teasing*

In order for us to examine this question, we first must define what a tease is. *Teases* have been defined as potentially hurtful or damaging comments directed towards an individual about something that is personally relevant to them (for a review see Keltner et al., 2001). In this way, the use of teasing can create a highly threatening situation between the teaser and the target. What separates teasing from other paralinguistic verbal behaviours or undertones, such as disapproval, are the qualifying verbal and non-verbal cues that are attached to the offending comments. Verbal cues may include statements such as, "I'm just kidding" at the end of the hurtful comment. Non-verbal cues may include smiling, laughing, poking, or nudging. These signals are intended to communicate with the target that the comment is not to be taken seriously, the assumption being that the threat to both teaser and target is reduced (Goffmann, 1967; Keltner et al., 2001).

*Discrepant perceptions of teasing*

Kruger and colleagues (2006) have shown, however, that teasing qualifiers are not as effective as the teaser might assume, often creating a communication rift between the teaser and the target. Specifically, teasers tended to minimize the negative impact of the tease, perceive the situation more favourably, and downplay any malevolent intentions relative to the targets. Unlike the targets of a tease, teasers tended to construe the tease more positively. Teasers and targets also differed in the importance they placed on the intentions of the teaser. Teasers rated their intentions as being of primary importance whereas targets were more concerned with the action or behaviour of the teaser. Additionally, observers who were unrelated to the situation placed less importance on the intentions of the teaser than did the teasers themselves.

This seems to suggest that a communication gap is formed between the involved parties whereby the teaser has positive intent, but the target is either unaware or unconcerned with the teaser's positive intentions. Subsequently, the tease would be perceived as less threatening from the perspective of the teaser than the target of the tease. As a result, this discrepancy in perceptions could have potentially damaging consequences for a relationship. Why then, do people engage in this behaviour if it could have negative repercussions for their relationships?

*Behaviour of the teaser*

There are several reasons why people might engage in teasing. Individuals' past experiences with teasing in general may predict whether they tease (Bullmer, Harris, Milich, & Georgesen, 2003). Individuals who have teased other people in the past may be more likely to initiate teasing. If someone has a history of teasing, they may also be more likely to view teasing as less severe than those who do not tease as often. Teasing may also be more likely to occur if there is a history between the teaser and the target (Kowalski, 2004). Individuals are usually less likely to tease someone who they are not comfortable with. Thus, there must be some kind of relationship between two people for them to engage in teasing

Much of the research into teasing has focused on the negative effects of teasing (e.g., Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). Some researchers contend that the function of teasing is to alienate others and thereby improve one's social standing (Tragesser & Lippman, 2005). By using tactics such as bullying, taunting, and put-downs, a person can presumably elevate themselves over others, and create a sense of superiority or dominance. In this way, teasing can be thought of as antisocial behaviour that does not facilitate a positive relationship between the teaser and the

target. This kind of teasing seems to focus more on the agency of the teaser, designed to give him or her a sense of efficacy and control over the interpersonal situation. Some recent research, however, has begun to explore the more positive aspects of teasing (e.g., Barnett, Burns, Sanborn, Bartel & Wilds, 2004; Kowalski, 2004). For example, using teasing to flirt, create humour, or resolve conflicts, can facilitate prosocial, or positive interactions between the teaser and the target. This divergence in the literature suggests that teasing may have multiple uses, and perhaps the nature of the relationship between the teaser and the target is one of the determinants of how teasing will be used by the teaser and perceived by the target.

Individuals may tease frequently because of a desire for some kind of response, whether it be positive or negative, but is often initiated because the target of the tease has violated some social norm or is engaging in behaviour considered undesirable by the teaser (see Keltner et al., 2001). For example, parents often tease children to point out violations of prohibitions, selfishness, sulking, or aggression (e.g., Dunn & Brown, 1994). Thus, teasing can help bring about social change that will benefit a relationship, at least from the teaser's point of view. Given that the subject of the tease usually involves a sensitive matter, the message is delivered in a way that the teaser considers less threatening than a more direct method might be (Keltner et al., 2001), such as telling someone they are overweight or that their favourite shirt is ugly. Even if it is just an opinion, telling someone directly can be extremely damaging to the individual. Adding qualifiers to the statement makes the seriousness of the message unclear and thus can be dismissed by either the teaser or the target should the message be too hurtful. It is not necessarily true that teasing need to convey some specific message, however, teasing may be used to display a certain

amount of caring or affection. It may also be used simply as a form of humour, in order to increase feelings of positivity within the relationship.

*Perceptions of the target*

Several factors may influence individuals' perceptions of teasing. First, just as history of the teaser may be important for why people initiate teases, it is also important for how the target of the tease may perceive being teased. Individuals' past experiences with teasing in general may predict their perceptions and reactions to being teased by others (Bullmer, Harris, Milich, & Georgesen, 2003). Experience with being the target of a tease can lead individuals to be more emotionally responsive to teasing in later life. Individual difference factors, including the Big Five personality traits, have also been linked to teasing behaviour and may influence how people perceive being teased (Bollmer et al., 2003). For example, individuals who were higher in neuroticism reported more instances of being teased, and reacted more negatively to teasing than those low in neuroticism (Georgesen, Harris, Milich, & Bosko-Young, 1999). Finally the content of a tease is important for perceptions of teasing (Kowalski, 2004). The content of teases can vary considerably, from insignificant information to information that is extremely personal to the target. The type of relationship two people share, then, is potentially an important factor for how someone perceives being teased. The longer someone has been in a relationship with another person, the more comfortable they are with them, the more they know about them, and the more they may have been exposed to teasing situations with them in the past, all of which play important roles in determining how someone might perceive and react to a teasing situation with that person.

*Teasing in relationships*

Teasing does not appear to be limited to a specific group of people. Teasing is a widespread occurrence, happening in many different relationships and settings. Studies have shown that teasing occurs in children as well as adults (e.g., Betcher, 1981), in females as well as males (e.g., Alberts, 1992), and among different types of relationships or roles (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oeming, & Monarch, 1998; Tragesser & Lippman, 2005). Differences in teasing have been shown, such as individuals who are in a socially dominant role (e.g., parents versus children, bosses versus subordinates, etc.) tend to tease more (e.g., Keltner et al., 1998).

Teasing typically occurs, however, among individuals who possess a certain level of familiarity. Presumably the closer two people are, the more information they possess about each other, and thus the more familiar they are with what buttons to push to elicit a reaction, either positive or negative, from the other person. This suggests that there could be differences in teasing and perceptions of teasing depending on the level of closeness one experiences with another person. How individuals feel about one another, including how close we perceive that other to be, may act as a moderator that reduces the potentially harmful effects of teasing. There are many possible reasons for this. A large body of research exists, showing that people tend to idealize their romantic partners, evaluating their partner's traits (even the less desirable ones) in the most positive way (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994). In many cases romantic partners are the epitome of the "close other", however individuals may employ these "positive illusions" to differing degrees for other types of close relationships as well. Furthermore, this tendency to use positive illusions could extend beyond partner traits to include specific partner behaviour, and in

particular teasing. Thus, individuals may place a positive spin on potentially

threatening, ambiguous feedback from someone they feel close to. Additionally,

inherent to increased levels of closeness is also an increase in the level of trust we

have for the other person. Perhaps this higher level of trust causes us to believe that

the close other has only the best intentions for us and this, in turn, influences how we

interpret potentially threatening behaviour from the other person. Perhaps, then,

teasing may not be as damaging to relationships as Kruger and colleagues' findings

might suggest provided the teasing occurs in close relationships. We believe that the

dynamic of the relationship, specifically whether the individuals are close or not, may

determine how positive or negative the target perceives the tease to be.

*Current study*

To this end, we investigated one such factor that may play a role in reducing

the harmful effects of teasing, namely how psychologically close the two individuals

involved in the teasing situation are perceived to be. We predicted that as individuals'

level of psychological closeness increases, so would their positive evaluations of

teasing (*Hypothesis 1*). Thus, any teasing behaviour that could have potentially

threatening connotations would be downplayed, perhaps in order to protect a valued

relationship with someone who is close. As we have mentioned, because teasers

generally tease about something of personal relevance to the target, it creates a

potentially threatening situation for the relationship. If individuals are motivated to

protect their relationships because of the feelings of closeness they experience with

the other person, then the target may engage in processes to reduce the threat (i.e.,

downplaying the negative valence or intent of the tease), thus protecting themselves

and their relationship.

*Teasing and personality traits*

Importantly for the current study, very little research has examined how self-esteem and narcissism, two factors that should have significant effects on interpersonal communication, mediate the interpretation of teasing. Additionally, previous research has found strong correlations between neuroticism and self-esteem (e.g., Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002). Given that social status and role are significant predictors of teasing, it is plausible that personality variables which influence how we view ourselves in relation to others might very well play a role in how we perceive and use teasing in our relationships. It is possible that individuals experience either a heightened (e.g., narcissistic individuals) or lowered social status psychologically (e.g., low self-esteem individuals), which could lead them to tease or view teasing in different ways. If someone possesses an inferior sense of self, evaluating themselves to be less important or less significant than others, it is possible that they would be less likely to tease others and would respond more negatively to being teased (*Hypothesis 2*).

## Study 1

The first study was a within-subjects design that assessed what participants thought about teasing in general, as well as what they thought about teasing when they were the teaser and when they were the target of a tease. We examined the relation between teasing behaviours, reactions to teasing, and personality variables, such as self-esteem and level of narcissism. We also wanted to explore more broadly individuals' perceptions of the reasons for teasing in general, and compare that to their perceptions of teasing on a more personal level.

Method

*Participants*

A total of 137 introductory psychology students at Wilfrid Laurier University took part in this study. Participants received partial course credit in exchange for their participation. Twenty-one participants were excluded from the analyses because they did not follow instructions or left the majority of the questionnaire blank. Eleven participants entered 0 as item responses when 1 was the lower endpoint on the scale. In each case, these items evaluated negative intent, feelings, or thoughts towards their most significant other, such as "To what extent did you intend to hurt _____'s feeling with the tease?" Because it is likely that participants interpreted 0 as being "not at all", we recoded these responses into 1's to correspond with the endpoints on our scale. The rest of these participants' responses gave no indication of ceiling or floor effects, or that they misunderstood instructions in any other way.

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants took part in this study by completing a series of questionnaires in an online session. In order to examine participants' perceptions of teasing they completed a questionnaire consisting of three separate sections: teasing in general, teasing a close other, and being teased by a close other (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire).

*Teasing In General*

The first section assessed participants' general impressions regarding teasing. This included an open ended question asking "In general, why do you think people tease others?". Then, participants completed eight items assessing their general impressions about teasing. These eight items used an 11-point scale. The items are as

follows: "In general, how often do you think people tease?" (1 = Not at all, 11 = Very frequently); "How effective do you think teasing is when trying to communicate a message to someone?" (1 = Not at all effective, 11 = Extremely effective); "In general, how comfortable do you think people are with being teased?" (1 = Not at all comfortable, 11 = Extremely comfortable); "In general, how positively do you think people view teasing?" (1 = Not at all positive, 11 = Extremely positive); "In general, how negatively do you think people view teasing?" (1 = Not at all negative, 11 = Extremely negative); "In general, how humorous is teasing?" (1 = Not at all humorous, 11 = Extremely humorous); "In general, how serious is teasing?" (1 = Not at all serious, 11 = Extremely serious); and "In general, how insulting is teasing?" (1 = Not at all insulting, 11 = Extremely insulting).

Following this, participants were asked about the percentage of time they teased for a particular reason. This scale included eight items: to communicate a message, to flirt, to break the ice, to be mean, as a joke, to get someone to do what you want, to change someone else's behaviour, to communicate affection, communicate caring, and to communicate friendship. Each of these items could be divided between 100% of all times spent teasing, so each item could receive a score of 0-100% but participants were instructed that the total for all eight items could not exceed 100%. Of the 137 participants who completed the question, 33.6% failed to follow these instructions, and so the sum of the eight items ranged from 20% to 640%.

*Teasing a close other*

Next, participants were asked to think about the most significant person in their lives at that time and provide information about the relationship (i.e., the person's initials, type of relationship, and length of the relationship). Then, they wrote

down the details of a time in which they teased this person, and what their motivation

was for teasing this person.

Following this, participants evaluated the tease on several items adapted from a

scale used by Kruger et al., 2006. The items were rated on a scale from 1 (Not at all)

to 11 (Extremely). From these questions we created two separate composite scores.

The first score was a measure of the valence of the tease consisting of: "How

humorous would you say this tease was?"; "How mean would you say this tease

was?"(R); "How light-hearted would you say this tease was?"; "How hurtful would

you say this tease was?"(R); and "How annoying would you say this tease was?"(R)

($\alpha = .71$). The second score was a measure of the intent of the tease consisting of: "To

what extent was the tease given with good intentions?"; "To what extent did you

intend to hurt _____'s feelings with the tease?"(R); and "To what extent do you think

_____ thought you were 'just kidding'?" ($\alpha = .69$). The last item, "At the time of the

teasing, how important was it that _____ believed you were "just kidding?", measured

how important it was to participants that there were good intentions behind the tease.

The final measure in this section was a mood scale (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988).

This is a 23-item measure using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Very slightly or Not at

all) to 5 (Extremely). Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they felt each

of 23 moods during the situation they described. Ten of these items measured positive

affect (e.g., inspired, excited; $\alpha = .87$), and 13 items measured negative affect (e.g.,

jittery, upset; $\alpha = .96$).

*Being teased by a close other*

The third section was identical to the previous section except that participants

were asked to think about a scenario in which the other person teased them.

Participants completed the valence ($\alpha$ = .81), intent ($\alpha$ = .75) and mood scales (positive mood, $\alpha$ = .88; negative mood, $\alpha$ = .95; affective arousal, $\alpha$ = .93) as in the previous section. The items, however, were reworded where appropriate to correctly match the situation.

Participants' level of self-esteem was then assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), consisting of 10 items ($\alpha$ = .89) on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (Very strongly disagree) to 9 (Very strongly agree). This scale contains items such as, "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" and, "I do not have much to be proud of" (R).

Finally, participants completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979) which consists of 37 ($\alpha$ = .93) items using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Examples of items include, "I am an extraordinary person.", "I like having authority over other people."

<div align="center">Results</div>

*General thoughts about teasing*

We first examined participants' responses to the question of why, in general, people tease others. Two separate raters coded for the number of positive and negative reasons for that each participant provided ($\alpha$ = 98). Ninety-six percent of participants listed at least one negative reason for teasing (e.g., vengeance or insecurity), compared to only 30% of participants who listed at least one positive reason for teasing (e.g., a way to make conversation or joke around). Participants' frequency ratings indicated that they tended to believe that teasing happens frequently ($M$ = 7.84, $SD$ = 1.87), but that it is not very effective at communicating a message to someone ($M$ = 4.89, $SD$ = 2.45). They also reported that people usually feel uncomfortable being teased ($M$ =

3.71, $SD$ = 2.24). Additionally, participants tended to state that, in general, people do not feel very positive about teasing ($M$ = 3.71, $SD$ = 2.11) and actually feel fairly negative about teasing ($M$ =7.57, $SD$ = 2.37). Furthermore, teasing was considered to be serious ($M$ = 6.65, $SD$ = 2.54), and was deemed to be generally insulting ($M$ = 7.40, $SD$ = 2.23) (see Table 1).

*Personal teasing use*

How participants use teasing in their own lives looks a little different from how they think teasing is used in general. In their personal interactions, they reported using teasing primarily to joke ($M$ = 7.09, $SD$ = 2.46). Also, teasing was often used as a way of flirting ($M$ = 6.41, $SD$ = 2.63), to show affection ($M$ = 6.03, $SD$ = 2.52) or as a sign of friendship ($M$ = 6.00, $SD$ = 2.39), however, were all relatively high (see Figure 1). Participants reported that they do not often use teasing to be mean ($M$ = 3.33, $SD$ = 2.29), to persuade ($M$ = 3.88, $SD$ = 2.47), or to change another's behaviour ($M$ = 3.65, $SD$ = 2.18) (see Table 2).

When asked to record what percent of all time spent teasing was done for a particular purpose, participants reported spending a lot of their time teasing to joke ($M$ = 32.14, $SD$ = 19.57), followed by flirting ($M$ = 27.95, $SD$ = 17.97) and the least amount of time teasing to persuade ($M$ = 4.26, $SD$ = 4.72) or to change someone's behaviour ($M$ = 5.32, $SD$ = 5.32) (see Table 3).

Additionally, when asked about a scenario in which they teased a significant other, only 19% of participants listed a negative reason for teasing (e.g., "being mean," "her hair looked really bad") and 88% listed a positive reason for teasing (e.g., "It was friendly and for humour," "To be humorous and to flirt with him"). This is a complete reversal from their responses for why people tease in general. Even when

participants were asked to recall an event where a significant other teased them, only 29% of participants listed a negative reason for the tease (e.g., "she makes fun of me all the time for being a wimp about needles," "she teased me about getting fat"), whereas 82% listed a positive reason (e.g., "humour," "flirting," "to show caring").

*Prosocial versus antisocial teasing*

The three open-ended descriptions of teasing provided by the participants (in general, participant as teaser, and participant as target) were coded by two independent coders for how prosocial versus antisocial participants' teases were in nature (see Table 4). For the specific incidents, the tease that participants recalled and the reason given for the tease were both considered together. A score between 1 (antisocial) and 7 (prosocial) was assigned separately to each of the three open-ended descriptions. An independent rater coded a random subset of 35 of each of the general teasing responses ($\alpha = .83$), participant as the teaser responses ($\alpha = .74$), and the participant as the target responses ($\alpha = .65$). These showed reasonable reliability. Participants' responses to teasing in general suggested that when participants thought about teasing with no reference to their own personal relationships, they typically talked about teasing as being more antisocial in nature ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 1.41$). In contrast, when talking about teasing scenarios in their own lives, participants used examples that were more prosocial in nature both in the role of the teaser ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .84$) and when they were the recipient of a tease ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.09$). In other words, when thinking about teasing in general, participants stated reasons that were more hurtful of the other person (e.g., to be mean or for revenge), but when teasing occurred between themselves and a significant other, the situations that they recalled were much more prosocial (e.g., to communicate caring, to flirt) (see Figure 2).

We submitted the ratings of prosocial versus antisocial reasons for teasing for the three open-ended descriptions to a repeated measures ANOVA and found a significant main effect of scenario, $F(1, 115) = 290.15$, $p < .001$. Follow-up contrasts showed that there was no difference between ratings of prosocial versus antisocial when the participant was the teaser versus when the significant individual was teasing, $t(102) = .83$, $p = .41$. When asked to state why people tease in general, however, participants listed reasons that were less prosocial than when they listed reasons for their own teasing, $t(103) = 12.31$, $p < .001$, teasing received from a significant other, $t(106) = 11.88$, $p < .001$ and the average ratings of both teasing a significant other and being teased by them, $t(107) = 13.11$, $p < .001$.

*Valence of tease and intentions*

Next we examined participants' ratings of the specific teasing incidents in which they either teased or were teased by a close other (see Table 5). In contrast to Kruger et al.'s (2006) study, we found no difference in perceived valence of the event when participants were teasing versus when they were being teased, $t(109) = .99$, $p = .32$. Thus, our participants rated both the tease given to their significant other and received from their significant other to be equally positive or negative. However, consistent with Kruger and colleagues' findings, our participants reported having more positive intentions when they delivered the tease than when a significant other teased them, $t(109) = 2.43$, $p < .02$.

Interestingly, it was much more important that the participants' significant others knew that the participants were just kidding than it was for the participant to understand that their significant others were just kidding, $t(108) = 4.04$, $p < .001$.

*Affective reactions*

Next we examined participants' affective reactions to their own teasing and being teased by a significant other. Our participants showed no difference in negative affectivity for either teasing or being teased, $t(121) = -1.49$, $p = .14$. Although they did tend to experience more positive affect when they were the ones teasing than when they were being teased, $t(121) = 5.84$, $p < .001$ (see Table 6).

*Individual difference variables*

Next we examined whether participants' level of self-esteem and narcissism was correlated with each of our dependent variables: intent, valence, positive affect, negative affect and prosocial reasons for the tease. Self-esteem was related to participants' perceptions of their significant other's tease in that the higher participants' self-esteem was, the more positively they evaluated the intentions of the other person's tease, $r(106) = .20$, $p = .04$. Self-esteem was also significantly related to negative affect when teasing a significant other in that the higher participants' self-esteem was the lower their negative affect was, both when teasing a close other, $r(106) = -.20$, $p = .05$, and when being teased by a close other, $r(106) = -.27$, $p = .006$. (see Table 7).

As participants' level of narcissism increased, they reported experiencing more positive affect when teasing a close other, $r(105) = .20$, $p = .04$, and, oddly, more positive affect when being teased by a close other, $r(105) = .21$, $p = .04$. (see Table 8).

Neither self-esteem nor narcissism were significantly correlated with any of our other dependent variables.

Discussion

Past findings that teasing is a negative form of social interaction (e.g., Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell & Evans, 1998) are certainly echoed in the current research when participants reported why people might tease in general. When it came to teasing in their own lives, however, participants rarely listed situations that were negative in tone. In fact, they reported quite the opposite when teasing involved someone close to them. When participants were thinking about a close other, they viewed teasing from the perspective of the teaser and target to be humorous and all in good fun.

Similar to Kruger et al.'s (2006) findings, our participants perceived their own teasing to contain more positive intentions than when they were the target of the tease. When evaluating how positive or negative the tease was, however, participants in our study evaluated teases from a close other no differently than the evaluations of their own teases. Additionally, Study 1 clearly showed that when participants think about teasing in general, they consider it to be quite negative. When asked about the reasons why people tease, participants generally gave antisocial motivations for teasing. Interestingly, however, when they were asked to think about teasing between themselves and someone they are close to, their recall of the event was much more positive compared to their general thoughts about teasing. It seems that when participants use teasing in their own lives, they believe it to be for more prosocial purposes. These findings are consistent with our hypothesis that positive evaluations of teasing increase as psychological closeness increases. In other words, it seems that participants perceive teasing from close others more positively than they view teasing in general.

Our results also indicate that self-esteem and narcissism may play a role in individuals' perceptions of teasing. Participants with higher narcissism seem to experience more positive emotion when involved in a teasing situation with a close other; it is unclear as to what effect this would have on perceptions of teasing. One could presume that experiencing more positive affect after being teased would serve to lessen the negative effects of the tease. Contrary to this presumption, however, higher narcissistic individuals did not tend to perceive being teased by a close other as being more positive in either intent or valence. It appears that teasing is more threatening to individuals who are higher in narcissism and perhaps the increase in positive emotion is a way for them to buffer the negative effects of teasing. Individuals who are high in self-esteem, on the other hand, seem to experience lower levels of negative affect when teasing and being teased. Further, participants with higher levels of self-esteem rated the other person's intentions more positively than those with lower self-esteem. It seems then that individuals who are high in self-esteem are more likely to react positively to teasing in a close relationship. Perhaps possessing higher levels of self-esteem acts as a buffer to protect against the potential threat of teasing.

Even though comparing what participants thought about teasing in general to teasing in their own lives yielded some striking contrasts, Study 1 is not without its limitations. First, it is difficult to directly compare participants' responses to teasing in general to more specific instances of teasing because we used a different methodology and instructions when asking them about teasing in general compared to teasing in their own personal experience. Participants' open ended responses strongly suggest that individuals can construe teasing more or less positively based on the context. This is reflective of previous literature showing that teasing can be viewed both as a

prosocial or antisocial form of interaction (e.g., Keltner et al., 2001). Thus, it is possible that in varying our methodology and instructions, we elicited different conceptualizations of what teasing is. Specifically, the items that participants responded to between their open ended responses to teasing in general and the items asking them about teasing in their own lives (e.g., "How often do you tease to joke?") could have elicited positive perceptions of teasing. Although this brings about its own set of interesting questions, it does not fully address our primary hypothesis, that is whether participants rate teasing in close relationships more positively than in less close relationships. Second, we only asked participants to think about the most significant person in their life. It is likely that the level of psychological closeness between our participants and their target other was consistently quite high. Due to the restrictions brought about by our instructions however, it is impossible to determine whether level of closeness is responsible for participants evaluating teasing from a close other more positively than they would evaluate teasing in general. In order to determine whether closeness affects people's perceptions of teasing, it is necessary for us to manipulate the level of closeness participants feel with their target other more directly. Finally, all participants in Study 1 were asked to recall an instance in which they were the teaser before they recalled an instance in which they were the target. It is possible that thinking about being a teaser first influenced both their recall and subsequent responses to the event in which they were the target.

## Study 2

In Study 2, we wanted to test more directly whether there are differences in perceptions of teasing due to the level of closeness individuals feel towards the other person involved in the teasing. To fully test this, it was necessary for us to compare

perceptions of teasing between close individuals and individuals who are not close. To accomplish this, in Study 2 we manipulated level of closeness as a between-subjects factor whereby participants were randomly assigned to either a close other condition or a non-close other condition. We expect that the self-other differences in participants' evaluations of the valence and intentions of the tease will be greater when not close others are involved than when close others are involved.

Also, in Study 1 participants described the event in which they teased the other person first, followed by describing the event in which they were teased by the other person. As a result, it is unclear whether the results observed for the second scenario, in which participants had a relatively positive evaluation of being teased by the other person, resulted from their positive evaluations of their own teasing. By counterbalancing the order that participants recall the events, we hoped to address this issue in Study 2. Another novel feature of Study 2 is that we introduced measures of post-tease relationship appraisal. These measures were included to test whether participants felt differently about their relationship with the other person depending on whether they initiated the tease or were the target of the tease.

<div align="center">Method</div>

*Participants*

A total of 219 introductory psychology students at Wilfrid Laurier University took part in exchange for partial course credit. Forty-nine participants were excluded from the analyses for not following instructions. Typical issues included participants signing up for the study but not completing it, not remaining consistent throughout the study (i.e., talking about a different target person for each of the recall events), or not

being able to recall a teasing instance (e.g., "I never teased him").[1] Results are

reported for the remaining 170 participants (34 men, 135 women and 1 unreported).

Participants' mean age was 19.34 ($SD = 3.15$).

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants were recruited from the participant pool for a study examining

verbal behaviour perception. Interested participants provided an email address where

they could be contacted. They were then randomly assigned to either a close other

condition or a non-close other condition. A link to the appropriate condition was

included in an email message and they took part in this study by completing a series of

questionnaires in a single online session. After providing consent, participants read

that this study was designed to investigate people's perceptions about interpersonal

communication, in particular teasing.

Then, participants in the close other condition were asked to, "Please think of

the most significant person in your life right now. What are his or her initials?",

whereas participants in the non-close other condition were asked to, "Please think of a

person who you interact with on a regular basis but are NOT close with. What are his

or her initials?" In addition, they were asked to report the type of relationship they had

with this person (i.e., sibling, friend), and how long they had known this individual, in

months and years. Participants were then instructed to, "Please think of this person for

the rest of the questionnaire, this person will be represented throughout the survey by

_____." (see Appendix B)

---

[1] In the close other condition, eight participants were unable to report a teasing situation, compared to 16 participants in the not close condition. It is possible that this difference is an indication that participants are more likely, or better able to engage in teasing with individuals who are close to them. Due to the small numbers, however, we are unable to statistically explore this possibility.

As a manipulation check, all participants completed a scale of closeness. The scale consisted of 6-items, rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true) to 9 (Completely true). The scale was comprised of the following items: "I can tell _____ anything.","_____ and I have a unique bond", "I feel closer to _____ than to any one else in my life", "At times, I feel out of touch with _____"(R), "I would choose to spend time with _____ than with anyone else in my life.", and, "I feel extremely attached to _____" ($\alpha = .91$). (See Appendix C for the closeness scale)

As in Study 1, all participants were asked to write about two teasing events involving this other person and list reasons for why the tease occurred. Participants were randomly assigned to either think about the situation in which they were the teaser first, or to think about the situation in which they were the target first.

Immediately following each situation recall, participants were asked to fill out a separate post-tease relationship appraisal scale that assessed how they felt about their relationship with the other person right after the teasing incident. Participants responded to the following items (1 = Extremely agree, 9 = Extremely disagree): "I wanted to spend a lot of time with _____.", "I felt very close to _____.", "I felt distant from _____." (R), "I couldn't be certain that my relationship with _____ would continue."(R), and "I wanted to spend less time with _____."(R) ($\alpha > .86$) (See Appendix D). Participants then rated the valence ($\alpha > .79$) and intent ($\alpha > .66$) of the tease using the same scales as in Study 1, in addition to the PANAS ($\alpha > .86$). Also like Study 1, participants completed the RSES ($\alpha = .90$) and the NPI ($\alpha = .94$). Finally, participants were asked to complete a series of demographic questions including gender, age, and ethnicity.

Results

*Preliminary analyses*

As a manipulation check, we assessed how close participants felt to the other individual prior to recalling any teasing events. An independent samples *t*-test confirmed that participants felt significantly closer to the other person in the close condition ($M = 6.90$, $SD = 1.39$) than in the not close condition ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(168) = 15.46$, $p < .001$.

Participants were randomly assigned to think about a situation in which they teased first, or in which they were the target of a tease first. We found no significant order effects for any of our dependent variables and thus have dropped order as a factor in our analyses.

Similarly, gender, age and ethnicity did not yield significant results, thus we collapsed across these variables and they will not be discussed further. In the analyses that follow, our dependent variables were submitted to a mixed-model ANOVA with scenario (teaser vs. target) as the within-subjects factor and closeness (close other vs. non-close other) as the between-subjects factor.

*Valence of tease and intentions*

The ANOVA performed on ratings of valence (see Table 9) indicated that participants perceived the valence of the tease more positively when they were teasing versus when they were being teased, $F(1, 168) = 17.37$, $p < .001$. Interestingly, however, there was not a main effect of closeness, indicating that participants saw no difference in the valence of teasing among those close to them versus individuals who were not close, $F(1, 168) = 1.88$, $p = .17$. Even though we found no main effect of condition, we had predicted that participants in the not close other condition would

evaluate their own teases to be more positive than the tease from the other person, whereas participants in the close other condition would show no self-other differences, thus, we conducted a simple effects test. Contrary to our prediction, however, the simple effects test yielded no significant results, $F(1, 168) = 2.00, p = .16$. The pattern of the results, however, was in the predicted direction. Participants ratings from a close other were more similar to ratings of their own teases than were the ratings of a not close other.

The ANOVA performed on ratings of intent (see Table 10) indicated that, similar to our findings in Study 1, participants perceived their intentions as being more positive when they delivered the tease than when the other person teased them, $F(1, 168) = 7.95, p < .005$. Furthermore, a main effect of closeness indicated that participants rated the intentions of teasing among close relationships to be more positive than teasing among non-close relationships, $F(1, 168) = 6.48, p = .01$. Although the interaction was not significant, $F(1, 168) = 2.32, p = .13$, it was in the direction that we expected and we proceeded with simple effects analyses (see Figure 3). Consistent with our hypothesis, when the other individual was close there was no difference in the ratings participants gave to their own intentions compared to the intentions of the other person, $F(1, 168) = 1.02, p = .31$. However, when the other individual was not close, participants rated the intentions of their own tease to be significantly more positive than the intentions of the other person's tease, $F(1, 168) = 8.01, p = .005$.

We next examined rating of how important it was that the teasing was perceived as being in jest. Similar to Study 1, participants were more worried about the other person believing that they were just kidding than they were about believing

that the other person was just kidding, $F(1, 212) = 18.74, p < .001$. Participants cared more when the teasing occurred between close others than not close others, $F(1, 212) = 7.20, p = .008$ (see Table 11).

*Affective reactions and post-tease relationship appraisal*

We next examined participants' ratings of their affective reactions to the teasing scenarios. We first examined positive affect (see Table 12). An ANOVA performed on the positive affect ratings revealed that participants in the close other condition experienced no more positive affect during the teasing situation than those in the not close other condition, $F(1, 168) = .44, p = .51$. Participants did, however, report more positive levels of affect after teasing another person, $F(1, 168) = 28.44, p < .001$, than they did after being teased by another person. In other words, when people were teased they tended to feel less positive than when they were teasing.

We then examined negative affect (see Table 13). In this instance, the main effect of teasing scenario was significant, $F(1, 168) = 56.65, p < .001$. Participants experienced more negative affect when being teased than when they were the instigators of the tease. Participants experienced no differences in negative affect, however, when teasing a close other compared to teasing a not close other, $F(1, 168) = .44, p = .51$.

Next, we examined participants' ratings of how positively they evaluated their relationship following each of the teasing events. A significant main effect of post-tease relationship appraisal indicated that, in general, participants evaluated their relationships more positively for teasing incidents that involved close others than when they involved not close others, $F(1, 168) = 47.1, p < .001$. Participants also

reported more positive post-tease relationship appraisal when they were the teaser versus when they were being teased, $F(1, 168) = 20.95$, $p < .001$ (see Table 14).

*Individual difference variables*

We then correlated self-esteem and narcissism with each of the dependent variables within each level of closeness. We first examined these variables within close relationships. When participants were teasing a close other, their self-esteem (see Table 15) was correlated positively with their post-tease relationship appraisal, $r(100) = .30$, $p = .003$. When a close other was involved, participants with higher self-esteem tended to rate their relationships more positively after teasing that person. We observed a similar effect for valence of the tease. Self-esteem was related to ratings of valence when participants were teasing a close other, $r(100) = .32$, $p = .001$, and being teased by a close other, $r(100) = .21$, $p = .04$. Thus, when teasing situations occurred within close relationships, those who were high in self-esteem rated a tease more positively than those who were low in self-esteem. Self-esteem was also related to both positive affect, $r(100) = .21$, $p = .03$, and negative affect, $r(100) = -.20$, $p = .05$, when participants were being teased by a close other. Participants experienced more positive affect and less negative affect when they were teased by someone close to them.

A reverse pattern of results appeared for narcissism (see Table 16). Participants' level of narcissism was related to their ratings of the valence of the tease from a close other, $r(100) = -.21$, $p = .04$. Thus, the higher participants were in narcissism, the more negatively they evaluated being teased by a close other. Narcissism was also related to how positively participants rated the intentions of the tease from close others, $r(100) = -.24$, $p = .02$. Thus, when participants were being

teased by a close other, they rated the intentions of the tease more negatively when they were higher in narcissism. Narcissism was also positively related to participants' positive affect after being teased by a close other, $r(100) = .20, p = .05$.

When the teasing involved a not close other, self-esteem was not significantly correlated with any of the dependent variables. In situations involving a tease from non-close others, narcissism was only significantly related to participants' valence ratings, $r(70) = -.28, p = .02$. The higher participants scored on narcissism, the more negatively they rated their own tease of a not close other.

Neither self-esteem nor narcissism were related to any other dependent variable for either the close other or not close other conditions.

*Prosocial versus antisocial teasing*

Participants provided both descriptions and perceived explanations for each of the teasing scenarios. Two independent coders, who were unaware of the purpose of the study, coded each of the teases for level of prosocial versus antisocial teasing, using a scale from 1 (antisocial) to 7 (prosocial). Interrater reliability for both the scenario in which the participant was the teaser ($\alpha = .81$) and the scenario in which the participant was the target of the tease ($\alpha = .78$) were reasonably high. An average of the two raters' final ratings were taken as the final score of prosocial teasing.

An ANOVA performed on the prosocial ratings (see Table 17) indicated that there was no significant main effect of closeness, $F(1, 166) = 1.12, p = .29$, suggesting that teasing reported in close relationships is as prosocial as the teasing in not close relationships. There was not a significant main effect of teasing scenario, however a marginally significant interaction did emerge, $F(1, 166) = 3.72, p = .06$. An examination of the means and simple effects analyses indicated that there were no

significant self-other differences in the level of prosocial teasing for participants who were thinking about an interaction with a close other. However, for participants who were thinking about an interaction with a not close other they reported significantly less prosocial teasing when being teased than when teasing, $F(1, 166) = 3.76, p = .05$ (see Figure 4).

## Discussion

Participants' perception of the intent of a tease showed a similar pattern to that found in Study 1. Participants perceived the intentions of a tease to be more positive when they were teasing the other person than when the other person was teasing them. In addition, and consistent with our hypothesis, the present study indicated that participants had a more positive view of teasing intentions in their close relationships than in their non-close relationships.

When participants in Study 2 were asked to rate the valence of the teases, they tended to perceive their own teases as being more positive than teases received from the other person. Participants also viewed teases from a close other more positively than teases from someone who was not close.

The present study also extended past research by examining participants' views about how teasing affected their relationships. Participants appraised their relationships with non-close others more negatively when involved in a teasing scenario than when the scenario involved close others. However, even in close relationships, participants appraised their relationship more negatively when they were being teased by the other person than when they were the ones teasing. It may be that this change in relationship appraisal reflects a distancing effect. It is possible that when faced with a potential threat, individuals try to distance themselves from the

source of the threat, even if the source is a valued other. This distancing may be a relatively easy endeavour when the tease originates from someone who we have very little emotional investment in, however, when the tease originates from an individual who is close to us distancing may be difficult, or even impossible, and the attempt might result in a certain amount of anxiety. Thus, another option is for the target of the tease to engage in rationalization and interpret the tease as being more benign than they would otherwise.

Study 2 may seem to support the previous finding that participants engaged in egocentric bias when involved in teasing situations with others by perceiving their intentions as being more benevolent than the intentions of others (Kruger, et al., 2006), and if the influence of relationship closeness is removed, our results do indeed support these finding. However, upon closer inspection, the results in Study 2 provide some support for our contention that participants are less likely to display this tendency when close others are involved, perhaps in an attempt to protect their valued relationships from the potentially threatening effects of teasing. Participants perceived the teasing intentions of someone who was close to them more positively than someone who was not close. Indeed, when we compared teasing among close others to non-close others, we found that there were no differences between the perceived intentions when participants teased a close other compared to when that person teased them. When the teasing involved a non-close other, however, participants rated their own teases more positively intentioned than the teases of the other person. This pattern provides some support for the possibility that participants perceive being teased more positively when a close other is involved than when the tease originates from someone who is less close.

As in Study 1, an interesting pattern of results emerged for self-esteem and narcissism, indicating that they play an important role in determining how individuals perceive and respond to teasing. Individuals who have higher self-esteem tended to perceive the valence and intentions of teasing from close others more positively, suggesting that teasing is less threatening for individuals with high self-esteem than for their low self-esteem counterparts. High self-esteem individuals also tend to report more positive and less negative affect when they tease close others. This could suggest that teasing in close relationships is a more pleasant experience for individuals with higher self-esteem. A reversal is seen for people who were high in narcissism. When being teased by close others, they perceived teasing as being more negative in both valence and intentions than individuals low in narcissism. Interestingly, even though participants who were high in narcissism were more likely to negatively evaluate a tease, they still managed to feel more positively during teasing situations.

## General Discussion

It is well documented that teasing is an ambiguous and potentially threatening form of communication, add to this the various individual biases inherent to all types of interpersonal communication, and the interpretation of teasing because problematic. Highlighting this, Kruger and colleagues (2006) found that participants rated teasing much more positively when they were the teaser compared to when they were being teased.

Taken together, our studies and those conducted by Kruger and colleagues (2006) suggest that people may tend to view their own teasing through rose coloured glasses. Participants tended to rate the perceived valence and intention of the tease more positively when they were the teaser versus when they were the recipient of the

tease. Support can also be found for this contention in studies conducted by Kruger using unbiased observers who tended to rate valence and intent for teasing more similarly to the target of a tease than to the teaser. This is also evidenced in participants' affective responses. Participants reported feeling generally more positive when they were teasing compared to when they were being teased.

The results of our second study, however, seem to suggest that this effect could be moderated by the effect of relationship closeness. Even though participants displayed an egocentric bias when it came to the evaluations of teasing intentions, there was some evidence that they rated teasing from someone who is close to them more positively compared to less close individuals. In Study 2, participants viewed the intentions of a tease by close others no different than their own intentions, however they evaluated the intentions of a less close individual to be more negative than their own.

One possible explanation for this finding is that when we asked our participants to think of the most significant person in their lives they became motivated, perhaps through a form of self-protection or relationship protection, to reduce the potential threat received from someone who is integral to their lives. Even though Kruger and colleagues (2006) sampled pairs of individuals who one could presume had relationships that were close in nature (e.g., roommates), they employed no measure of closeness and thus there was no way to know for certain how close participants were to each other.

Teasing occurs in many different types of relationships, including very close relationships, however past research has failed to address how closeness affects our perceptions of the ambiguities in teasing. Clearly, as threatening as teasing is, it is not

often cited as being a major contributing factor for failed relationships, if it is mentioned at all. Is it the case that individuals in close relationships tease about less relevant and threatening issues? It appears that this might be one explanation. When thinking about a teasing interaction with a close other, participants tended to recall events involving more prosocial teasing, however when a non-close other is involved, the recalled events tended to be less prosocial in nature.

Unfortunately, the current research does not provide consistent evidence to support our supposition that when individuals receive potentially threatening information from a close other they evaluate this information more positively than when it originates from a less close individual. In Study 1, we received partial support in participants' valence ratings, in which they rated teases from a close other to be no different than their own teases. Consistent with Kruger and colleagues (2006) findings, however, participants did perceive their own teasing to be better intentioned than teases from a close other. In Study 2, we received partial support for our hypothesis in the ratings of intention, in which they rated a close other's intentions to be no different from their own intentions. Conversely though, participants reported higher valence rating for their own teases than the teases from a close other, although the pattern was similar to that of intentions. Our results suggest that there could be differences between ratings of teases from close others versus less close others, but because our results are somewhat inconsistent, we can not conclude definitely that individuals evaluate teasing from a close other more positively than teasing from a less close other.

One possible explanation for our inconsistent results lies in our methodology. Participants in Study 1 were asked to think about teasing in general prior to recalling

teasing in their own personal lives. For the majority of participants, this elicited initially negative thoughts about teasing. For example, many participants reported that teasing was used by insecure individuals in order to raise their self-esteem or power over others. This may have subsequently influenced the types of events that participants recalled in their own personal scenario recalls. We also asked participants in Study 1 about their opinions about specific instances of teasing in their own lives (e.g., flirting, communication) prior to their recall, this is another possible influence on what events they recalled and how they evaluated the event. Even though we asked participants how often they used teasing for both positive and negative purposes, due to self-presentational issues, they may have reported using teasing for primarily positive reasons. Thus, their subsequent recall and evaluation may have been driven by their desire for self-presentation maintenance.

From our analyses, we can not preclude the possibility that teasing among close individuals was qualitatively different from teasing among not close individuals, that is to say that the content of the tease from close others may in fact be relatively benign. Consistent with this possibility, ratings of the content of the tease made by objective raters showed the same interaction pattern as the participants' ratings of intention. One way to know for certain that participants are not choosing less threatening events to talk about when a close other is involved would be to present all participants with the same teasing content and then have them rate the intent and valence of the tease. By holding the content constant, we could be more certain that the difference is in the perceptions of the target of the tease and not in the content itself.

Another interesting possibility is that closeness interacts with various personality variables to influence how people perceive teasing. It appears as though being high in self-esteem may provide a barrier to the negative effects of teasing in close relationships. High self-esteem individuals tend to report a positive experience in general when recalling teasing events involving those closest to them. Conversely, individuals higher in narcissism appear to be more sensitive to the negative effects inherent in teasing.

In general, individuals seem to react more negatively to teasing from less close individuals. Being close to someone may be one situation that influences how we perceive teasing, but it seems that within close relationships one's individual traits play specific roles in perceptions of teasing. Specifically, in the context of close relationships, higher levels of self-esteem seem to provide a cushioning effect against the potentially negative effects of teasing, whereas higher levels of narcissism seem to have the opposite effect causing individuals to be more reactive to teasing.

Much of the past research on teasing has mainly explored the negative and potentially harmful aspects of teasing. A large portion of the literature focuses on how teasing relates to things like bullying or power inequality. Only recently has the literature begun to explore the more positive aspects of teasing. Although teasing can be used as a tool for exclusion or to elevate one's own status, it can also be used as a tool to help create and maintain positive social interactions, such as through humour or flirting. The current research has demonstrated that individuals are aware that teasing can serve different purposes, some positive and some negative. Even though previous research has begun to explore the dual nature of teasing, no studies to date have examined the factors which influence when individuals perceive teasing as

positive or when they view it as negative. The current research suggests the possibility that relationship closeness is one variable that may influence someone's perceptions as to whether teasing is used to put someone down or exclude them from a group, or whether it is used to help foster positive relations between themselves and another individual.

# References

Alberts, J. K. (1992). An inferential/strategic explanation for the social organization of teases. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 11*, 153-177.

Barnett, M. A., Burns, S. R., Sanborn, F. W., Bartel, J. S., & Wilds, S. J. (2004). Antisocial and prosocial teasing among children: Perceptions and individual differences. *Social Development, 13*, 292-310.

Betcher, R. W. (1981). Intimate play and marital adaptation. *Psychiatry, 44*, 13-33.

Bullmer, J. M., Harris, M. J., Milich, R., & Georgesen, J. C. (2003). Taking offense: Effects of personality and teasing history on behavioral and emotional reactions to teasing. *Journal of Personality, 71*, 557-603.

Dunn, J., & Brown, J. (1994). Conflict resolution with friends, siblings, and mothers: A developmental perspective. *Aggressive Behavior, 23*, 343-357.

Georgesen, J. C., Harris, M. J., Milich, R., & Bosko-Young, J. (1999). 'Just teasing…': Personality effects on perceptions and life narratives of childhood teasing. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*, 1254-1267.

Goffmann, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.

Keltner, D., Capps, L., Kring, A. M., Young, R. C., & Heerey, E. A. (2001). Just teasing: A conceptual analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin, 127*, 229-248.

Keltner, D, Young, R. C., Heerey, E. A., Oemig, C., & Monarch, N. D. (1998). Teasing in hierarchical and intimate relations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*, 1231-1247.

Kowalski, R. M. (2004). Proneness to, perceptions of, and responses to teasing: The

　　influence of both intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. *European Journal of*

　　*Personality, 18,* 331-349.

Kruger, J., Gordon, C. L., & Kuban, J. (2006). Intentions in teasing: When "just

　　kidding" just isn't good enough. *Journal of Personality and Social*

　　*Psychology, 90,* 412-425.

Leary, M. R., Springer, C., Negel, L., Ansell, E., & Evans, K. (1998). The causes,

　　phenomenology and consequences of hurt feelings. *Journal of Personality and*

　　*Social Psychology, 74,* 1225-1237.

Murray, S. L., & Holmes, J. G. (1993). Seeing virtues in faults: Negativity and the

　　transformation of interpersonal narratives in close relationships. *Journal of*

　　*Personality and Social Psychology, 65,*707-722.

Murray, S. L., & Holmes, J. G. (1994). Story-telling in close relationships: The

　　construction of confidence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20,*

　　663-676.

Tragesser, S. L., & Lippman, L. G. (2005). Teasing: For superiority or solidarity? *The*

　　*Journal of General Psychology, 132,* 255-266.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations for Teasing in General (Study 1)*

| Item | M | SD |
|------|---|----|
| How often do people tease? | 7.83 | 1.93 |
| How effective is teasing? | 4.93 | 2.52 |
| How comfortable people are with being teased? | 3.66 | 2.22 |
| How positive is teasing? | 3.64 | 2.12 |
| How negative is teasing? | 7.51 | 2.41 |
| How humorous is teasing? | 5.82 | 2.55 |
| How serious is teasing? | 6.68 | 2.49 |
| How insulting is teasing? | 7.38 | 2.19 |

*Note.* Ratings were made on an 11-point scale.

Table 2

*Means and standard deviations for teasing use in personal life (Study 1)*

| Uses of Teasing | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Communication | 4.65 | 2.34 |
| Flirtation | 6.53 | 2.56 |
| Break the ice | 4.59 | 2.86 |
| To be mean | 3.52 | 2.42 |
| Joke | 7.14 | 2.38 |
| Persuasion | 3.97 | 2.47 |
| To change behaviour | 3.91 | 2.29 |
| Affection | 6.08 | 2.42 |
| Caring | 5.10 | 2.51 |
| Friendship | 6.05 | 2.52 |

*Note.* Ratings were made using an 11-point scale (1 = Not at all, 11 = Very frequently).

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations for Percentage of Time Participants Use Teasing for a Particular Purpose (Study 1)*

| Uses of Teasing | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| Flirtation | 27.95 | 17.97 |
| Break the ice | 9.81 | 8.85 |
| To be mean | 8.15 | 10.57 |
| Joke | 32.14 | 19.57 |
| Persuasion | 4.26 | 4.72 |
| To change behaviour | 5.32 | 5.32 |
| Affection/ Caring/ Friendship | 12.72 | 10.83 |

*Note.* Ratings given as a percent where the total for all reasons given equalled 100%.

Table 4

*Rated Prosocial vs. Antisocial Teasing as a Function of Teasing Scenario (Study 1)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | General | | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | |
| Ratings | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| Prosocial vs. antisocial teasing | 1.88 | 1.41 | 3.79 | .84 | 3.75 | 1.09 |

*Note.* Ratings were made using a 7-point scale (1 = antisocial, 7 = prosocial).

Table 5

*Rated Valence of the Tease, Intent of the Tease and Desire to Believe it was a Joke as*

*a Function of Teasing Scenario (Study 1)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measures | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | | Significance |
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Valence of the tease | 8.18 | 1.63 | 8.03 | 2.12 | *Ns* |
| Intent of the tease | 8.91 | 1.96 | 8.53 | 2.13 | * |
| Desire to believe it was a joke | 8.32 | 2.98 | 7.09 | 3.27 | * |

*Note.* ratings were made using an 11-point scale (1 = Not at all, 11 = Extremely), * = p

< .05; ** = p < .01.

Table 6

*Rated Positive and Negative Affect as a Function of Teasing Scenario (Study 1)*

| Measures | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Positive Affect | 2.83 | 0.87 | 2.47 | 0.94 | *** |
| Negative Affect | 1.89 | 1.08 | 1.99 | 1.10 | Ns |

*Note.* Ratings were made using a 5-point scale (1 = Very slightly or Not at all, 5 = Extremely). *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 7

*Correlations of Self-Esteem as a Function of Teasing Scenario (Study 1)*

| Correlates | Teasing Scenario | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Participant as Teaser | Participant as Target |
| Valence | -.10 | .13 |
| Intent | .09 | .25** |
| Positive Affect | -.25** | -.21** |
| Negative Affect | -.35*** | -.34*** |

*Note.* *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 8

*Correlations of Narcissism as a Function of Teasing Scenario (Study 1)*

| | Teasing Scenario | |
|---|---|---|
| Correlates | Participant as Teaser | Participant as Target |
| Valence | .03 | -.12 |
| Intent | .01 | -.10 |
| Positive Affect | .29** | .26** |
| Negative Affect | .28** | .24** |

*Note.* $*p < .05.$ $**p < .01.$ $***p < .001.$

Table 9

*Rated Valence of the Tease as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | | Significance |
| Condition | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Close Other | 7.18 | 1.87 | 6.61 | 2.24 | *** |
| Not Close Other | 6.93 | 1.77 | 6.09 | 2.45 | *** |

*Note.* ratings were made using a 10-point scale (1 = Not at all, 10 = Extremely). *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 10

*Rated Intent of the Tease as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship*

*Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | | Significance |
| Condition | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Close Other | 7.86 | 1.86 | 7.64 | 1.99 | * |
| Not Close Other | 7.40 | 2.04 | 6.66 | 2.60 | *Ns* |

*Note.* ratings were made using a 10-point scale (1 = Not at all, 10 = Extremely). *$p <$

.05. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 11

*Rated Extent to Which it Was Important to Believe That the Tease was a Joke as a*

*Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | |
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | |
| Condition | M | SD | M | SD |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Close Other | 7.23 | 2.59 | 5.86 | 2.96 |
| Not Close Other | 6.64 | 2.72 | 5.26 | 2.85 |

*Note.* ratings were made using a 10-point scale (1 = Not at all, 10 = Extremely).

Table 12

*Ratings of Positive Affect as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | |
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | |
| Condition | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Close Other | 2.39 | .80 | 2.09 | .75 |
| Not Close Other | 2.45 | .88 | 2.14 | .94 |

*Note.* ratings were made using a 5-point scale (1 = Very slightly or Not at all, 5 = Extremely).

Table 13

*Ratings of Negative Affect as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship*

*Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | |
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | |
| Condition | M | SD | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Close Other | 1.64 | .77 | 2.14 | 1.00 |
| Not Close Other | 1.75 | .92 | 2.19 | 1.00 |

*Note.* Ratings were made using a 5-point scale (1 = Very slightly or Not at all, 5 =

Extremely).

Table 14

*Rated Post-tease Relationship Appraisal as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing scenario | | | |
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | |
| Condition | M | SD | M | SD |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Close Other | 7.16 | 1.48 | 6.57 | 1.92 |
| Not Close Other | 5.30 | 1.87 | 4.73 | 2.15 |

*Note.* Ratings were made using a 9-point scale (1 = Extremely agree, 9 = Extremely disagree).

Table 15

*Correlations of Self-Esteem as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship*

*Closeness (Study 2)*

| Close Other | Teasing Scenario | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Participant as Teaser | Participant as Target |
| | n = 100 | |
| Post-tease relationship appraisal | .30** | .10 |
| Valence | .32** | .21* |
| Intent | .18 | .01 |
| Positive Affect | -.10 | .21* |
| Negative Affect | -.12 | -.20* |
| Prosocial vs. Antisocial | .06 | .10 |

| Not Close Other | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | n = 70 | |
| Post-tease relationship appraisal | -.13 | -.05 |
| Valence | -.10 | .06 |
| Intent | .13 | .09 |
| Positive Affect | .17 | .07 |
| Negative Affect | -.12 | -.14 |
| Prosocial vs. Antisocial | -.06 | -.07 |

*Note.* $*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.$

Table 16

*Correlations of Narcissism as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | |
|---|---|---|
| Close Other | Participant as Teaser | Participant as Target |
| | N = 100 | |
| Post-tease relationship appraisal | -.04 | -.12 |
| Valence | -.10 | -.21* |
| Intent | -.08 | -.24* |
| Positive Affect | .11 | .20* |
| Negative Affect | .13 | .15 |
| Prosocial vs. Antisocial | -.13 | -.10 |

| Not Close Other | | |
|---|---|---|
| | n = 70 | |
| Post-tease relationship appraisal | .14 | .21 |
| Valence | -.28* | -.17 |
| Intent | -.16 | -.11 |
| Positive Affect | .19 | .20 |
| Negative Affect | .19 | .13 |
| Prosocial vs. Antisocial | -.15 | -.20 |

*Note.* $*p < .05.$ $**p < .01.$ $***p < .001.$

Table 17

*Ratings of Prosocial vs. Antisocial Tease as a Function of Teasing Scenario and Relationship Closeness (Study 2)*

| | Teasing Scenario | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Participant as Teaser | | Participant as Target | | Significance |
| Condition | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Close Other | 5.33 | 2.42 | 5.59 | 2.18 | *Ns* |
| Not Close Other | 5.39 | 2.28 | 4.87 | 2.59 | * |

*Note:* Ratings were made using a 7-point scale (1 = antisocial, 7 = prosocial). *$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure 1. *Proportion of Time Participants Spent Teasing Others for Various Reasons*
*(Study 1).*

**Reason for Teasing**
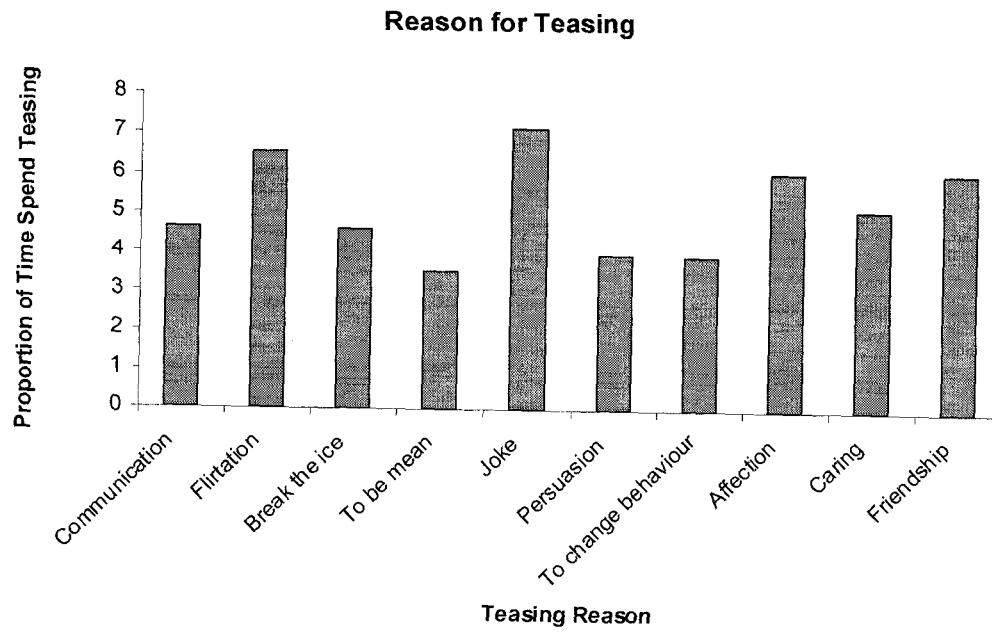
Figure 2. *Level of Prosocial vs. Antisocial Teasing Within the Teasing Context (Study 1).*



**Social Facilitation**
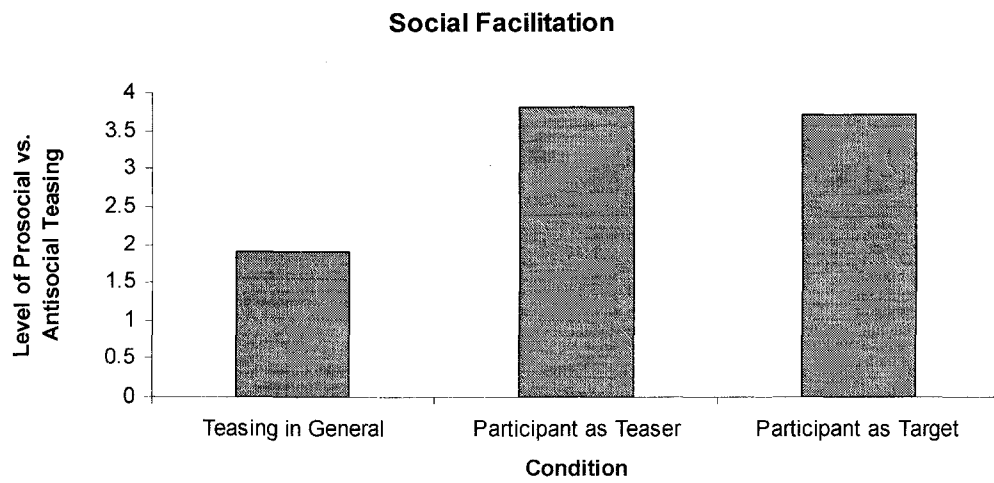
*Figure 2. Higher numbers signify more prosocial teasing.*

Figure 3. *Perceptions of Teasing Intentions (Study 2).*

**Perceived Intentions of the Tease**
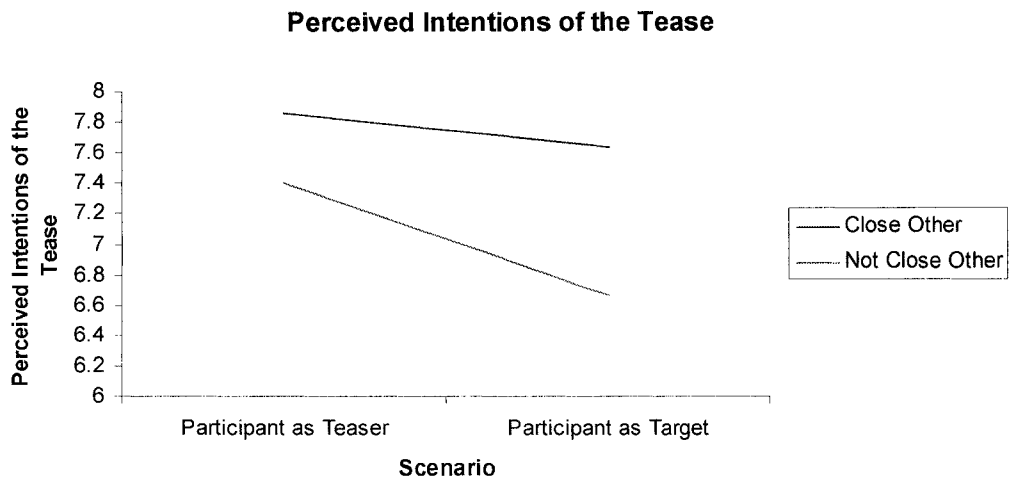


*Figure 3.* Higher numbers signify more positive teasing intentions.

Figure 4. *Prosocial vs. Antisocial Reasons of the Tease (Study 2).*

**Use of Prosocial Teasing**
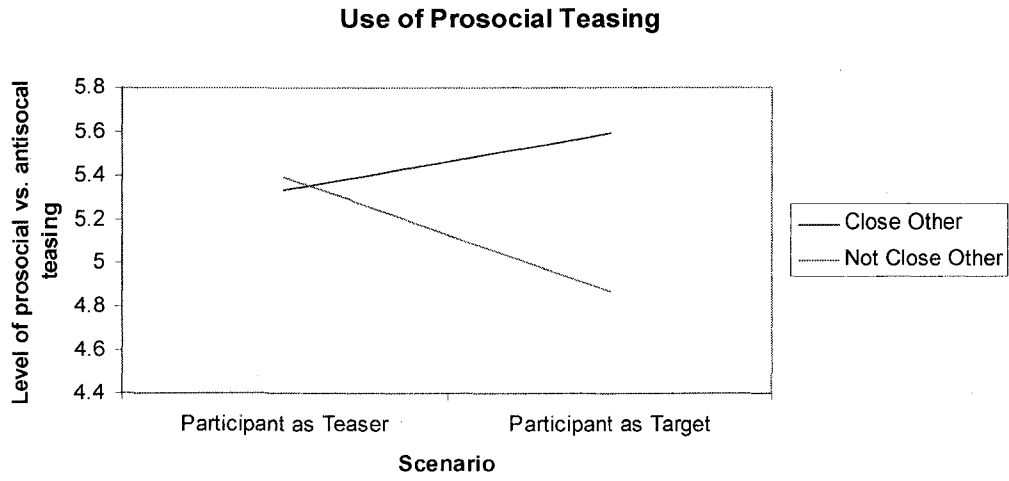


*Figure 4.* Higher numbers signify more prosocial teasing.

*Appendix A Study 1: Questionnaire*

We are interested in people's perceptions about interpersonal communication, in particular teasing.

In general, why do you think people tease others?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In general, how often do you think people tease?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all | | | | | | | | | | Very frequently |

How <u>effective</u> do you think teasing is when trying to communicate a message to someone?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all effective | | | | | | | | | | Extremely effective |

In general, how <u>comfortable</u> do you think people are with being teased?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all comfortable | | | | | | | | | | Extremely comfortable |

In general, how <u>positively</u> do you think people view teasing?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all positive | | | | | | | | | | Extremely positive |

In general, how <u>negatively</u> do you think people view teasing?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all Comfortable | | | | | | | | | | Extremely comfortable |

In general, how <u>humorous</u> is teasing?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all humorous | | | | | | | | | | Extremely humorous |

In general, how <u>serious</u> is teasing?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all serious | | | | | | | | | | Extremely serious |

In general, how <u>insulting</u> is teasing?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all insulting | | | | | | | | | | Extremely insulting |

Please us the following scale to answer the next set of questions.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all | | | | | | | | | | Very frequently |

How often do you personally use teasing to communicate a message? _____

How often do you use teasing to flirt with someone? _____

How often do you use teasing to break the ice with someone you have just met? _____

How often do you use teasing to be mean to someone? _____

How often do you use teasing as a joke? _____

How often do you use teasing to get someone to do what you want? _____

How often do you use teasing to change someone else's behaviour? _____

How often do you think people use teasing to communicate affection?

How often do you think people use teasing to communicate caring?

How often do you think people use teasing to communicate friendship? _____

Out of all the times you have teased another person, what percentage of the time do you generally tease for the following reasons (i.e., give each reason a portion of time from 0% to 100%, the total for all reasons should equal 100%)?

To flirt _____ %

To break the ice _____ %

To be mean to someone _____ %

As a joke _____ %

To get someone to do what you want _____ %

To change someone's behaviour _____ %

To communicate affection, caring, or friendship _____ %

Please think of the most significant person in your life right now. What are his or her initials? _____

What is your relationship with this person (e.g., sibling, friend, boyfriend/girlfriend)?

_____

How long have you known this person for (best guess)? _____ mths _____ yrs.

Please think of this person for the rest of the questionnaire.

Think of a time when you teased _____. Please write down as many details about the situation as you can recall.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What was the purpose or reason for teasing _____ in this situation (e.g., flirting, being mean, humour, etc.)?

_____

_____

_____

Thinking about the situation above, rate the following questions using this scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all | | | | | | | | | | Extremely |

1. How humorous would you say this tease was? _____

2. How mean would you say this tease was? _____

3. How light-hearted would you say this tease was? _____

4. How hurtful would you say this tease was? _____

5. How annoying would you say this tease was? _____

6. To what extent was the tease given with good intentions? _____

7. To what extent did you intend to hurt _____'s feelings with the tease? _____

8. To what extent do you think _____ thought you were just kidding?

9. At the time of the teasing, how important was it that _____ believed you were "just kidding"?

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the *situation that you just described.* Use the following scale to record your answers.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very slightly | A little | Moderately | Quite a bit | Extremely |
| or not at all | | | | |

_____  interested                _____  irritable

_____  distressed                _____  alert

_____  excited                   _____  ashamed

_____  upset                     _____  inspired

_____  strong                    _____  nervous

_____  guilty                    _____  determined

_____  scared                    _____  attentive

_____  hostile                   _____  jittery

_____  enthusiastic              _____  active

_____     proud                              _____ afraid

_____     uneasy                             _____ bothered

_____     uncomfortable

Think of a time when _____ teased you. Please write down as many details about the situation as you can recall.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What do you think _____'s purpose or reason was for teasing in this situation (e.g., flirting, being mean, humour, etc.)?

_____

_____

_____

Thinking about the situation above, rate the following questions using this scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Not at all | | | | | | | | | | Extremely |

1. How humorous would you say this tease was? _____

2. How mean would you say this tease was? _____

3. How light-hearted would you say this tease was? _____

4. How hurtful would you say this tease was? _____

5.  How annoying would you say this tease was? _____

6.  To what extent was the tease given with good intentions? _____

7.  To what extent did _____ intend to hurt your feelings with the tease? _____

8.  To what extent do you think _____ was just kidding?

9.  At the time of the teasing, how important was it that you believed _____ was

    "just kidding"?

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the *situation that you just described.* Use the following scale to record your answers.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very slightly | A little | Moderately | Quite a bit | Extremely |
| or not at all | | | | |

_____      interested              _____      irritable

_____      distressed              _____      alert

_____      excited                 _____      ashamed

_____      upset                   _____      inspired

_____      strong                  _____      nervous

_____      guilty                  _____      determined

_____      scared                  _____      attentive

_____      hostile                 _____      jittery

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| _____ | enthusiastic | _____ | active |
| _____ | proud | _____ | afraid |
| _____ | uneasy | _____ | bothered |
| _____ | uncomfortable | | |

*Appendix B Study 2: Non-close other condition*

**Condition 2**

Please think of a person who you interact with on a regular basis but are NOT close with. What are his or her initials? _____

What is your relationship with this person (e.g., sibling, friend, boyfriend/girlfriend)?

_____

How long have you known this person for (best guess)? \_\_\_\_\_ mths \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.

Please think of this person for the rest of the questionnaire.

*Appendix C Study 2: Closeness manipulation check*

**Please describe how you feel about this person right now using the scale below.**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not at all true | | somewhat true | | moderately true | | Very True | | completely true |

1.  1. I can tell _____ anything.......................................................    _____

2.  _____ and I have a unique bond...............................................    _____

3.  I feel closer to _____ than to anyone else in my life...........................    _____

4.  At times I feel out of touch with _____.......................................    _____

5.  I would choose to spend time with _____ over anyone else in my life......    _____

6.  I feel extremely attached to _____.............................................    _____

*Appendix D Study 2: Closeness measure*

Answer the following questions for how about felt right after the event you previously described involving _____. Please use the scale provided

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extremely Agree | Strongly Agree | Moderately Agree | Slightly Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly Disagree | Moderately Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Extremely Disagree |

I wanted to spend a lot of time with _____

I felt very close to _____

I felt distant from _____

I couldn't be certain that my relationship with _____ would continue.

I wanted to spend less time with _____