

SELF-OBJECTIFICATION AND APPEARANCE-BASED TEASING DURING ADOLESCENCE

Jeong-Ju Yoo
West Virginia University
Kim K.P. Johnson
University of Minnesota

Self-objectification theory posits women and girls who self-objectify treat themselves as objects to be looked at and adopt an outsider's perspective of their appearance. Our purpose was to identify how experiences of being teased related to self-objectification. Participants (n = 64) were adolescent females recruited from high schools. Data consisted of personal narratives that detailed an incident of appearance-based teasing. A content analysis of the narratives revealed participants were teased about their clothing, facial characteristics, weight, height, and hair. Ignoring teasing was reported as the most frequent response to a tease. High self-objectifiers reported purchasing new items to change their appearance in response to being teased.

In Western cultures, adolescence has traditionally been viewed as synonymous with the teenage years (Lloyd, 1985). Adolescence is a transitional period when childhood roles are redefined and as a result, adolescents may experience confusion over their sense of self and identity (Steinberg, 1985). Adolescence is not only a time of establishing and reestablishing identity, but also of increased self-awareness, self-consciousness, preoccupation with image, and concern with social acceptance (Kaiser, 1997). In this transitional period, peers exert an increasing influence and adolescents become increasingly aware of the self in relation to others. One of the ways adolescents exert influence on each other is by teasing. Understanding appearance-related teasing during adolescence is important because teasing can have prolonged, even permanent, effects on an individual.

Researchers have offered various definitions of teasing (Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001). Keltner et al. (2001) defined teasing as “an intentional provocation accompanied by off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target” (p. 234). Provocation as a tease involves an act, either verbal or nonverbal, that is intended to have some effect on the target. The off-record component of a tease accounts for its ambiguity as well as the sometimes humorous nature of a tease. Thus, teasing is an interpersonal behavior some people perceive to be fun and a matter of joking and others view as cruel and a means of hurting someone's feelings (Kowalski, 2000).

Teasing is one form of peer interaction that is directly tied to appearance and dress. Dress includes all body modifications made (e.g., tattooing, teeth whitening) as well as all body supplements (e.g., apparel, footwear) added to the body (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Only a few researchers have addressed the subject of a tease directly with adolescents. (Eder, 1991; Kowalski, 2000; Mooney, Creeser, & Blatchford, 1991; Thompson, Coovert, Richards, Johnson, & Cattarin, 1995). More often, researchers have asked adults to reflect on and recall their experiences with teasing during their adolescent years (Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986; Kowalski, 2000). Researchers interested in the effects of teasing have focused their attention mostly on how body satisfaction, body image, or self-esteem is affected by weight-or size-related teasing (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainder, & Story, 2003; Furman & Thompson, 2002; Gowen, 1998; Mottet & Thweatt, 1997). However, there are aspects of appearance other than weight that could be the content of a tease and could impact adolescents. In addition, there is limited research addressing how adolescents actually

respond to incidents of appearance-based teasing and whether they perceived their responses as effective in halting the teasing. In addition, no one has investigated what role personality variables such as self-objectification might play relative to adolescent's perceptions and responses to teasing. The extent to which an individual may self-objectify could be an important personality variable to consider because self-objectification deals with the degree to which an individual treats him or herself as an object to be looked at and to what extent the individual takes an outsider's perspective on their appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). If a young girl takes an outsider's perspective on her appearance, her reaction to being teased about some aspect of her appearance might be quite different from someone who does not take this view. Therefore, self-objectification as a personality variable may influence the impact of appearance-based teasing on an adolescent as well as influence responses to appearance-based teasing.

Thus, our research objectives were to identify 1) the content of teases experienced by adolescent girls and 2) the perceived effectiveness of the participant's responses to the teaser. We also investigated whether level of self-objectification was linked to any differences in the following: (3) experiences with teasing (i.e., how adolescents felt about being teased), (4) responses to a tease (i.e., how they reacted to being teased), and (5) made to appearance or in purchasing behavior as a consequence of being teased.

Theoretical Background

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) describe self-objectification as a form of self-consciousness characterized by habitual and constant monitoring of one's appearance. Objectification in women occurs when an individual separates her body from her being and views her body as representing her. Female adolescents might be prone to self-objectify because adolescence is a time of increased self-awareness, self-consciousness, and preoccupation with image (Sontag, Petue & Lee, 1997; Steinberg, 1985). When individuals self-objectify, they "adopt and internalize an outsider view" and treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated (Muehlenkamp & Saris-Baglama, 2002, p. 371). Self-objectification can lead to "continual self-monitoring which raises self-consciousness and contributes to feelings of shame and anxiety" (Muehlenkamp & Saris-Baglama, 2002 p. 371-372) as well as depressive symptoms (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) predicted that self-objectification "can be triggered and magnified by certain situations" (p.270). They contended that individuals are most likely to self-objectify in situations that accentuate their awareness of others' perspectives on their bodies and appearance. Being teased about some aspect of appearance is a situation where awareness of another's perspective on ones' appearance is heightened.

Applying tenets of self-objectification to a situation of teasing, appearance-related teasing could be viewed as a negative experience for a self-objectifier because attention is drawn to their appearance, something they are already acutely aware of. As a result of a negative comment made about appearance (i.e., a negative tease) a high self-objectifier might become more emotionally upset over being teased, experience more embarrassment, or feel more humiliation than a low self-objectifier. For example, a high self-objectifier, after getting teased about wearing a specific clothing style may make attempts to alter her appearance. Because a self-objectifier is interested in being socially appropriate and fitting into different situations as opposed to standing out, in response to being teased about clothing, a high self-objectifier would likely respond to the tease by obtaining and wearing different clothing.

Content of a Tease

Teasing about appearance is important during adolescence because physical appearance is a primary factor influencing social approval and acceptance (Georgeses, Harris, Milich & Bosko-Young, 1999; Kowalski, 2000). For a teaser who desires to hurt his or her victim, a key means of doing this is to imply that the person is not socially acceptable in terms of appearance. Furthermore, those who tease may choose to tease about specific body parts or aspects of appearance the target is not able to control, making the experience even more impactful on the individual (Kowalski, 2000) than if teased about other aspects. Researchers have documented that individuals are frequently teased about aspects of their appearance.

Cash (1995) in his investigation of what people were teased about asked 111 college women to reflect on their adolescent years. These women reported they had experienced appearance-related teasing (72%) often during their middle childhood to early adolescent years. Facial characteristics and weight were the most frequently reported content of a tease.

Subsequently, Alberts, Kellar-Guenther, and Corman (1996) asked undergraduate students to provide an example of being teased and to share what they had been teased about. Respondents' answers were categorized into six broad categories: things said, appearance, romance/sex, abilities, teasing, and identity. The things said category included comments about speech such as having an accent, making inappropriate statements, or verbal errors. The appearance category included comments about not having a tan, being bald, being hairy, being ugly, being short, and comments concerning a variety of other physical characteristics. The romance/sex category included aspects of the sex life, having an undesirable or not having a romantic partner. The abilities category included teases that made fun of the respondents' abilities or lack of them, such as individuals' ability to walk, dress, or cook. The teasing category included teases the respondents had taken part in previously. The identity category included teases that made fun of the recipients' personality or personal characteristics, such as eating too much or shopping too much. Researchers determined that there was a significant difference between the topics in their likelihood of occurrence such that respondents were more likely to report identity and appearance teases than other types of teases.

Kowalski (2000) had male and female undergraduates write narratives about their experiences with teasing during their adolescent years. The content of the teases were categorized into seven categories: relationships, body parts/appearance, behavior, intelligence, medical conditions, social group, and other. Women reported being frequently teased about body parts and appearance. Men were also teased frequently about their appearance but were equally teased about their relationships. When these individuals were teasing others, the reported content of the tease most often dealt with behaviors, followed closely by body parts, and appearance.

Responses to Teasing

Eder (1991) conducted an ethnographic study focused on teasing with Caucasian adolescents between the ages of 10-14. Her research team observed informal peer interactions during lunch periods on a regular basis over a three year period. In this context, not responding to teasing appropriately could have important consequences in terms of failing to develop social bonds. Eder found the most popular responses to teasing were ignoring it, telling a teacher, and retaliation. Students reported most of the teachers or other adults in the classroom just ignored teasing incidents.

Georgeses et al. (1999) assessed both the frequency with which undergraduate students teased and their reactions when experiencing teasing. Personality and teasing history information were collected and life narratives of past teasing experiences were elicited from

female and male undergraduate students. People who had favorable experiences with teasing in the past responded positively to teasing encounters. In contrast, people who had been adversely affected by teasing responded negatively. The more one was teased by others in the past, the less reported forgiveness for the teaser. When asked what the most effective response to being teased was, participants indicated the most effective response involved humor.

Negative Effects of Teasing

There are numerous documented negative outcomes associated with teasing during adolescence about one aspect of appearance—weight. Fabian and Thompson (1989) in research with females aged 10 to 15 found teasing about weight to be associated with low body esteem, high levels of depression, and greater eating disturbances. In related research, Thompson, et al. (1995) also found with adolescents (aged 10-15) that being teased about weight lead to increased restrictive eating and negative body image. Eisenberg, et al. (2003) examined adolescents in grades 7 to 12 and found that teasing about body weight was consistently associated with low body satisfaction, low self-esteem, high depressive symptoms, and thinking about and attempting suicide, even after controlling for actual body weight.

Teasing that occurs during adolescence can have prolonged, sometimes permanent effects on the target. Cash, et al. (1986) conducted a survey to see if what people remembered of being teased as children or teenagers affected their present body image. People who reported being teased by peers during childhood about their appearance were more likely to report being dissatisfied with their present body image than those who were not teased. In subsequent research Cash (1995) reported similar long-term residual effects of appearance-related teasing. Adult participants (71%) who reported they had experienced appearance-related teasing said that their current body images had, to some extent, been affected by the experience. Women who reported having had prevalent and distressing experiences with teasing held dissatisfying and disturbing body images.

Positive Effects of Teasing

While there is evidence that adolescent's experience with teasing can be negative, there are several pro-social functions associated with teasing (Eder, 1991). Eder found that peer teasing functioned as a means of initiating cross-sex interactions. Teasing was a safe way to show liking without being held accountable. Teasing was also a way to enhance feelings of closeness, unity, and was a means for teaching social norms. For teasing to be a positive experience, Eder (1991) noted that the target must respond in a playful manner; however she also noted that “the ability to respond appropriately to playful attacks may be one of the more difficult interactional skills to develop” (p. 183).

Method

Selection of Participants

Participants were 64 adolescent girls recruited from four middle schools and high schools located in a major metropolitan area in the Midwest. The participants' ages ranged from 12 – 17, with an average age of 14.3 years. They were Caucasians ($n = 27$), African-American ($n = 22$), multiracial ($n = 8$), Asian ($n = 4$), and Hispanic ($n = 3$). After being contacted by a youth program director, principals of four schools indicated an interest in the research and agreed to allow recruitment of students from their schools. A time was arranged to meet with the principal of each school to explain the nature of the study, the recruitment process, and to arrange for administering the questionnaire to the participants.

There were two requirements for inclusion in the research. The first requirement was that the potential participant had to have experienced being teased about appearance in the past six months. The second requirement was that the potential participant's age had to be between 12 and 17. The questionnaire and research procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (#0504S60608).

Parental consent forms were given to potential participants to give to their parents or guardians to sign. The participants were then asked to return the forms to the program director. Subsequently the school program director identified the adolescents who were willing and eligible to participate. Researchers were directed by teachers to collect the data during regular school hours. Before the questionnaire was administered to the volunteers, the nature of the study was explained to them. A participant assent form was discussed and signed by all participants.

Instrumentation

Teasing. Data on experiences with teasing was collected through the use of autobiographical narratives (Kowalski, 2000). In a pilot study ($n = 6$) participants were asked to write about a teasing incident during the past six months when they had been teased about some aspect of their appearance. This general request to write a brief story about teasing did not produce detail in responses. Therefore, the instructions to participants were revised to include specific questions participants were asked to respond to in their narratives. These questions were as follows: what were you teased about? What specifically was said to you? How did you respond to being teased? Did your response stop the teasing or did the teasing continue? Was it important to you that the person stop teasing you? How did you feel about being teased? Did you change anything about your appearance or anything else as a result of being teased? Did you buy any new items as a result of being teased? Is there anything else you would like to share about being teased?

Self-objectification. Participants' level of self-objectification was measured using a scale developed by Noll and Frederickson (1998). This scale assesses the extent to which individuals view their bodies in observable, appearance-based, objectified terms as opposed to nonobservable, competence-based, non-objectified terms. The measure consisted of 10 items that identify different body attributes: Five were physical appearance attributes and five were physical competence attributes. Physical appearance attributes were 1) sex appeal, 2) muscle tone, 3) weight, 4) attractiveness, and 5) measurements. Physical competence attributes were 1) health, 2) physical coordination, 3) stamina, 4) physical energy level, and 5) strength. Respondents ranked the 10 attributes from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important) according to how important they perceived each to be. To assess level of self-objectification, the physical appearance and physical competence scores were summed separately. Final scores for each participant were the result of the difference between the sum of the competence scores and the sum of the appearance scores (i.e., appearance scores minus competency scores). Scores can range from -25 to 25. High scores indicate individuals are high self-objectifiers.

Data Analysis Technique

A content analytic approach to data analysis outlined by Berelson (1952) was used to analyze responses. This approach consisted of a careful reading of the participant responses focusing on the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences in order to quantify them. According to Paoletti (1982), content analysis produces quantitative data from verbal communication. The narratives that the participants provided were defined as "text"; accordingly, this text was coded and placed into categories.

To meet the research objectives, all types of words with respect to each research question were coded. The primary researcher coded the data to determine the frequencies of certain words within the text and to quantify these frequencies objectively to determine the following: 1) content of teasing; 2) effectiveness of responses to the tease; 3) experience with teasing; 4) responses to a tease; and 5) changes to appearance or purchasing behavior as a consequence of being teased. The frequency of similar responses to each question was calculated to identify its pattern. As the patterns emerged from the data, individuals' comments on specific issues were included to support the findings.

Findings and Discussion

Content of Tease

Although 64 female adolescents participated, some participants shared more than one teasing incident; as a result our data represents 77 teasing incidents (see Table 1). Participants were teased about multiple aspects of their appearance. The specific items that served as the focus of a tease were categorized into the following seven categories: clothing (26.0%); facial features (16.9%); weight (15.6%); height (14.3%); hair (11.7%); body (10.4%); and other (5.2%). Items grouped into the clothing category included entire outfits, shoes, glasses, and contact lenses. Items classified as facial features included makeup, acne, teeth, forehead, or nose. Weight-related teasing included either overweight or underweight. Height-related teasing included either being tall or short. Hair-related teasing included hairstyles. Teasing about the body included hips, skin color, and feet. Other aspects of appearance-related teasing content included being considered as boyish, having skin diseases (other than acne), and having an attractive overall appearance compared to others (see Table 1).

Table 1

Teasing categories based on teasing content

Teasing Category	Specific content	Total	
		%	<i>n</i>
Clothing	Clothing in general	16.9	13
	Glasses (**)	6.5	5
	Shoes (**)	1.3	1
	Contact lenses (**)	1.3	1
	Total	26.0	20
Face	Acne	5.2	4
	Forehead	3.9	3
	Makeup	2.6	2
	Nose	2.6	2
	Teeth	2.6	2
Total		16.9	13
Weight	Overweight	13.0	10
	Underweight (*)	2.6	2
	Total	15.6	12
Height	Tall	7.8	6
	Short	6.5	5
	Total	14.3	11
Hair	Hairstyles	11.7	9
	Total	11.7	9

Body	Racial skin-color (*)	3.9	3
	Large “butt” (**)	2.6	2
	Feet (**)	1.3	1
	Skin (**)	1.3	1
	Tanned skin (**)	1.3	1
	Total	10.4	8
Other aspects of appearance	Boyish (**)	2.6	2
	Skin disease other than acne (*)	1.3	1
	Attractive appearance (*)	1.3	1
	Total	5.2	4
Total		100	77

*Teasing content found only among low self-objectifiers

**Teasing content found only among high self-objectifiers

Clothing was the most frequent focus of a tease perhaps because clothing is visible and could easily serve as the stimulus for a tease. Teasing about clothing might take place early in the school year as new students enter into an established environment of older students. Older students may want to communicate the established hierarchical power structure of the organization and use comments about clothing to “put new students in their place.” One participant shared that she was teased about her clothing because she was new to the school.

In addition, clothing may have served as the basis for many teases because adolescents place importance on their clothing (Littrell & Eicher, 1973). Clothing is important to social acceptance during adolescence and some adolescent groups develop informal dress codes (Eicher & Baizerman, & Michelman, 1991). Not wearing the “right” clothing may have made some adolescents the target of a tease because the clothing symbolized the wearer’s otherness. One participant noted, “I was teased about my clothes because I didn’t wear Abercrombie and Fitch often and because I was wearing something different from everyone else.”

Our findings are somewhat inconsistent with those of Cash (1995) who found that facial characteristics and weight were the most frequent subjects of a tease. From participant’s comments it was apparent that teasing about clothing generally stemmed from wearing clothing items that deviated in some way (e.g., less fashionable) from what was considered the norm for the school. Clothing may have been the focus of teases among these adolescents because they may have assumed that people freely choose what to wear and have control over their clothing unlike other body characteristics.

Effectiveness of Responses to Teasing

In order to determine whether participants perceived their responses were effective, we inquired about whether participants’ responses stopped the teasing. Out of the 64 participants, 43.8% revealed their response stopped the teasing; 54.7% reported their response did not stop the teasing; and 1.6% reported they were unsure about the success of their response in stopping the teasing. For those participants whose response did not stop the teasing, 62.9% indicated it was important to them to stop the teasing.

If a successful response to a tease is stopping the teasing, responses to teasing were not perceived to be successful because more than half of the participants indicated their responses did not stop the teasing. Noteworthy is the finding that telling an adult about the teasing successfully stopped the teasing in few instances (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participants' responses to teasing that stopped and not stopped teasing

Participant's Actual Response	Response that stopped teasing		Responses that did not stop teasing	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Ignore/walk away (38.9%; <i>n</i> = 26)	12	42.9	14	35.1
Say something back to the teaser (23.9%; <i>n</i> =16)	8	28.6	8	21.6
Tell the teaser to stop (11.9%; <i>n</i> =8)	3	10.7	5	13.5
Tell an adult about the teasing incident (**) (7.5%; <i>n</i> =5)	1	3.6	4	10.8
Get into a fight (**) (7.5%; <i>n</i> =5)	2	7.1	3	8.1
Laugh it off (6.0%; <i>n</i> =4)	2	7.1	2	5.4
Cry (*) (4.5%; <i>n</i> =3)	0	0	3	8.1
Total	28	100%	39	100%

Experience with teasing and Self-objectification

Participants' self-objectification scores ranged from -21 to 25, with a mean of .28 and a median of 1.0. Participants who scored at the median or higher were classified as "high self-objectifiers" (*n* = 34). Alternatively, those participants who scored lower than the mean were classified as "low self-objectifiers" (*n* = 33) (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Strelan, Mehaffey, & Tiggemann, 2003). All responses to a specific question were examined together within the high and low self-objectifying groups, respectively.

Teasing experience (i.e., participants' feelings about teasing)

Five patterns of teasing experiences. Participants' responses about their teasing experiences were categorized into five categories. The first category contained statements reflecting negative opinions and general attitudes toward being teased. Included in this category were statements such as, "Teasing is bad" and "Being teased makes people feel bad about themselves, but makes the other people feel good about themselves." The second category contained statements concerning feelings and emotions participants experienced as a result of being teased. Included in this category were statements such as "I was mad" or "I felt depressed." The third category contained statements about the residual effects of teasing on the target. Included in this category were statements such as "I felt lowered self-esteem," or "It made me feel really self-conscious." The fourth category contained statements indicating prosocial experiences of teasing. Statements placed here included statements such as "It depends on what they are teasing you about," or "It depends if it is my friends, then I took it as a joke." The fifth category contained statements about behaviors participants either engaged in or considered engaging in as a result of being teased. Examples are "It made me fight," or "I went to the bathroom to cry" (see Table 3).

Although both groups reported similar patterns in responses to teasers, being teased about their appearance may have signaled "failure" to high self-objectifiers. One high self-objectifier wrote, "It was kind of hard because then it made me think about myself and the way I looked. I guess it lowered my self-esteem. Another high self-objectifier noted, "I think

teasing brings your self-esteem down and it makes you hurt inside.” One low self-objectifier wrote, “I don’t care what they say,” and another commented, “I don’t let it bother me because it happens to me so often.”

Table 3
Five Patterns of Teasing Experiences

Category	How felt about being teased	Low self-objectifiers		High self-objectifiers		Total	
		%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Opinions/ Attitudes towards teasing	Did not like it	16.7	8	8.8	5	12.4	13
	Did not care/mind	12.5	6	10.5	6	11.4	12
	Hated being teased	6.3	3	5.3	3	5.7	6
	Felt that teasing is bad**	0	0	3.5	2	1.9	2
	Felt that teasing is wrong	2.1	1	1.8	1	1.9	2
	Felt teasing is not cool**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Felt that teasing makes other people feel good about themselves*	2.1	1	0	0	1.0	1
	Felt that teasing should stop**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Felt that teasing is hard to endure**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Total	39.7	19	35.3	20	37.1	39
Emotional aspects of teasing	Hurtful	6.3	3	12.3	7	9.5	10
	Angry/upset/mad	14.6	7	3.5	2	8.6	9
	Sad	2.1	1	5.3	3	3.8	4
	Embarrassed	2.1	1	3.5	2	2.9	3
	Depressed**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Horrible**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Frustrated**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Felt stupid**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Total	25.1	12	31.8	18	30.1	30
Residual effects on teasing target	Felt bad about myself	6.3	3	3.5	2	4.8	5
	Felt self-conscious	4.2	2	3.5	2	3.8	4
	Felt lower self-esteem	2.1	1	3.5	2	2.9	3
	Felt bothered	2.1	1	1.8	1	1.9	2
	Felt I am not wanted	2.1	1	1.8	1	1.9	2
	Felt insecure*	2.1	1	0	0	1.0	1
	Total	18.9	9	14.1	8	16.2	17
Prosocial aspects of teasing	Felt teasing is playful, depending on the content or who did it	10.4	5	14.0	8	12.4	13
	Total	10.4	5	14.0	8	12.4	13
Action/ Behavior	Felt like fighting*	6.3	3	0	0	2.9	3
	Cried**	0	0	3.5	2	1.9	2
	Felt like standing up for myself**	0	0	1.8	1	1.0	1
	Total	6.3	3	5.3	3	5.7%	6

* Specific content identified only among Euro-American participants

** Specific content identified only among non Euro-American participants

Responses to a Tease (i.e., participants’ reactions to teasing) and Self-objectification

Sixty-seven responses to being teased were identified and classified into nine categories. Overall, the largest number of participants (38.9%) indicated their response was to walk away or ignore the tease. Other responses included saying something back to the teasers

(23.9%) and telling the teasers to stop teasing them (11.9%). Although infrequent, some participants mentioned that they told adults about the incidents (7.5%), got into fights (7.5%), laughed off the teasing (6.0%), or cried (4.5%) (see Table 4).

Comparing low to high self-objectifiers, patterns in the participants' responses to being teased were similar. The response patterns from the two groups revealed the largest number of participants in both groups had either walked away or had ignored what had been said. However, only high self-objectifiers reported crying as a response to teasing and only low self-objectifiers indicated willingness to report teasing incidents to adults after being teased. The crying in response to a tease might be explained by the fact that high self-objectifiers are likely to be concerned about their appearance; thus, comments about their appearance could evoke strong emotions. In addition, perhaps high self-objectifiers felt no need to tell adults about the teasing because they were willing to accept another's negative appraisal of their appearance (the tease). One high self-objectifier participant shared, "I yelled at [the teasers], stood up for myself, but I see now that they were actually right [when they teased me about my clothes]." (see Table 4).

Table 4
Responses to Teasing Based on Self-objectification Level

Response	Level of self-objectification	Participants' Responses (Quotes)
Ignore/ Walk away	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 14; 41.2 %)	I didn't do anything. I ignored it a lot of the time, but it was kind of hard to sometimes, because they did it all the time.
	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 12; 36.4 %)	I said, "OK, whatever, look at yourself before you say something," and walked away. Just ignored them. I just said, "Okay" in a quiet voice, and walked away. Then I turned around and said that if I want to wear a skirt, that's my decision; they should respect that.
Say something back to the teasers	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 8; 23.5 %)	I told her that it wasn't right for her to do that. I said that wasn't very nice, and that it hurt me. I yelled at them, stood up for myself, but I see now that they were actually right. I also explained to her that my glasses were \$300 and contacts were \$400 – I couldn't afford new ones all the time.
	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 8; 21.2 %)	I said, "It is me, and it's not you," or I walk away and sometimes say things back. I said it doesn't bother me because someone is not going to take it and fight them.
Tell teaser to stop	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 4; 11.8 %)	I told them to stop teasing me, but they didn't listen to me. I said, "Shut up and leave me alone."
	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 4; 12.1 %)	I rolled my eyes and told them to stop it.
Telling adults about the teasing incidents	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 1; 2.9 %)	Sometimes I talk to people, and I write it down.
	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 4; 12.1 %)	I wanted to go tell my mom.
Get into a fight	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 2; 5.9 %)	I hit him on the side of the head with a pop can. I became really violent with him after that on many occasions.

	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 3; 9.1 %)	I would get into a fight.
Laugh it off	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 2; 5.9 %)	I tried to laugh it off.
	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 2; 6.1 %)	I laughed; it was kind of funny.
Cry	<i>High</i> (<i>n</i> = 3; 8.8 %)	I just ran to the bathroom to cry; I didn't say anything. I was quiet. I cried sometimes because it was always hard to handle, and I was getting so sick of it.
	<i>Low</i> (<i>n</i> = 0; 0%)	Not found

Changes in Appearance or Buying behavior based on Self-objectification

Among the 64 participants, 37.5% indicated that they did make a change or changes to their appearance or they purchased new items as a result of being teased. Participants tried to modify their hair (50%), followed by clothing (44.4%) and weight (41.7%). Participants who were teased about clothing specifically mentioned making a change in an attempt to halt the teasing: "Because I don't want the same thing to happen, I don't wear skirts any more. I always wear pants." Another participant who was teased about her hair stated, "I went to buy some stuff for my hair so it can grow." In addition to trying to change their hair or clothing, participants believed their weight was something they could also change as a response to being teased. Participants mentioned the following responses with respect to being teased about their weight: "I stopped eating for days at a time"; "I tried to lose weight"; and, "I started working out."

The majority (74.2 %) of low self-objectifiers indicated they did not make a change to their appearance as a result of being teased. In contrast, about half (48.5%) of the high self-objectifiers indicated they changed their appearance in response to and about half did not (48.5%) (see Table 5). Individuals who would be sensitive to the standards of outsiders (i.e., high self-objectifiers) would likely change their behavior in response to negative comments from others (i.e., teasing). Thus, our finding that some high self-objectifiers attempted to change their appearance in response to being teased is consistent with self-objectification theory. One possible explanation for why only some and not all high self-objectifiers changed their appearance in response to being teased is that some aspects of appearance are easier to change than others. It is possible when some high self-objectifiers were teased about their appearance they felt they did not have control over the aspect they were teased about, so they did not try to change anything. Comments from two high self-objectifiers illustrate, "I didn't really [change anything] because I can't suddenly become really skinny," and "I can't help being short. I can't change my height." Another possible explanation for why some changed but not others is some of the high self-objectifiers reported they selectively reacted to the teases received from others. For example, one high objectifier wrote, "Because the person who teased me isn't someone who has an influence over me."

Table 5
Self-objectification Level and Modification of Appearance

	Low self-objectifiers		High self-objectifiers		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes, I did change.	8	25.8	16	48.5	24	37.5
No, I did not change.	23	74.2	16	48.5	39	60.9
Other (Both)	0	0	1	3.0	1	1.6

Conclusions

The incidents of teasing reflected in our data demonstrate that adolescent girls were teased about multiple aspects of their appearance and frequently teased about their clothing. Our data conflicts with Cash (1995) who reported that facial characteristics and weight-related teasing among adolescent girls occurs with greater frequency than all other types of appearance-related teasing.

Our findings are consistent with other researchers who have reported ignoring the teaser is the most frequent response by adolescents to being teased (Scambler, Harris & Milich, 1998). Participants may have decided to ignore teasing comments for a variety of reasons. For example, if the goal of a teaser is to use the tease to upset an individual, then any reaction would mean the teaser gains an advantage over the teased. Teases may have also been ignored because advice on how to deal with teasing often includes the suggestions to ignore the teasing (Schindler, 1998).

Pawluck (1989) and Alberts (1992) indicated there is a range of possible responses to teasing. Although the most frequent response by these adolescents to teasing was to ignore it, participants did respond back to their teasers, and several told the teaser to stop the teasing. These findings support those of Drew (1987) who found teasing victims typically respond with serious verbal responses, and that they do so because they are responding to the negative intent inherent in this type of teasing. However, all children may not be equally capable of using such a strategy.

Being teased for most of our participants was not a positive experience. Overall, participants reported negative feelings and emotions about being teased, regardless of their level of self-objectification. This finding is consistent with both Kowalski (2000) and Thompson, Coovert and Stormer (1999) who also found that teasing about appearance often induced hurt feelings, depression, and negative self-evaluations.

Several high self-objectifiers reported they cried in response to teasing whereas none of low self-objectifiers reported crying. A strong emotional response to being teased is consistent with the idea that a self-objectifier would be sensitive to the comments of others and willing to take their perspective (i.e., outsider) and views to heart concerning their physical self.

The exact reasons as to why the high self-objectifiers reported less frequently that they told adults about teasing incidents were not explored in depth with participants. It is possible that they may have recognized what was “wrong” with their appearance or their body in comparison to others when they were teased and within the time it would take to tell an adult, decide to agree with the assessment.

Shopping for and purchasing clothing as well as other products used to alter appearance was considered an effective strategy for deflecting teasing comments. Perhaps peer teasing about appearance can be viewed as a type of shopping motivation among adolescents. Of those participants who went shopping in response to being teased, the majority were high self-objectifiers. These individuals may have been trying to modify and shape their appearance to be congruent with the teasers’ (i.e., outsiders’) views.

Many participants clearly wanted the teasing to stop. Frequently participant’s strategy to halt the teasing was to ignore it and in some instances, ignoring the behavior did stop some teasers but not all. So what can we be done to help adolescents respond effectively to teasing? Teasing is a form of harassment. Since school environments intended to be inclusive learning environments, perhaps the best strategy for an adolescent to take in response to harassment is to report the incident to adults who hold responsibility for the learning environment. Although there may be norms against reporting incidents (i.e., being a “tattle tale”) discussing

the incident with an adult may be the only successful recourse to an ineffective request to halt the behavior.

There are several directions that others might take in understanding the role and impact of teasing during adolescence. Our study provides a foundation for further investigation of what role self-objectification may play in adolescents' experiences with teasing using positivistic methods. Using our findings to develop quantitative items to measure experiences and responses to teasing along with other variables including self-esteem or depressive symptoms, would allow for direct testing of postulates of self-objectification theory with adolescents, an unexplored application of the theory.

There are several other personality variables (e.g., self-monitoring, self-esteem, introversion) that are worthy of investigation because they may assist in explaining differences in responses to teasing. Further investigation of teasing as a motivation to buy or shop is worthy of our attention. In addition, why adolescents do not seek help from adults would be an area to explore in future research.

In addition, the findings of this study reveal hopeful suggestions for educators through curriculum development. Although teasing during adolescence is a complex topic, educators can make students aware of how teasing can hurt other people's feelings in a variety of courses including health and child development. In a health course or a child development course, teasing can be included as an issue that has both short term and long term effects and one that has both negative and positive outcomes. Although tragic, stories about teenagers that commit acts of violence in high schools are often tied to teasing incidents. These events as well as stories about violence against the self (e.g., teen suicide) that are tied to teasing could be included as topics for discussion. Students could be involved in developing strategies for zero tolerance for negative teasing, halting negative teasing, and for effective responses to teasing.

There are several limitations to our research. We are not certain that the teasing events shared with us are reflective of participants' everyday lives because participants were asked to write about a specific teasing experience they recalled during the past six months. Recalled incidents may be especially powerful and exaggerated with time. Responses, especially those responses suggesting long-term impact (e.g., prolonged lowered self-esteem) may not be associated with a less memorable everyday incident of teasing. Thus, events reported to us may reflect exceptional experiences rather than everyday experiences with teasing.

Participants' level of self-objectification may also have influenced their recall of teasing because high self-objectifiers are likely to be better attuned to the comments of others concerning their appearance than low self-objectifiers. In addition, findings related to self-objectification must be interpreted with caution. Participants' self-objectification scores were measured at the time of data collection and the teasing incidents reported by the participants happened in the previous six months. The extent to which a participant self-objectified could have changed from the time of the teasing incident to the time that self-objectification was measured. Thus, any findings related to self-objectification must be viewed with caution.

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About the authors

Dr. Jeong-Ju (Jay) Yoo, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Fashion Design and Merchandising program at West Virginia University. He teaches in the areas of fashion merchandising and apparel design. His areas of expertise are retail merchandising, design theories, and product development. He conducts research in a number of areas including social psychological aspects of appearance and clothing consumption behaviors.

Dr. Kim K. P. Johnson, Ph.D. is a professor in the College of Design at the University of Minnesota. She teaches and conducts research in the areas of consumer behavior and the social psychology of appearance.

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