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Withstanding Cruel Teasing: Does Dispositional Mindfulness Fortify Target Immunity?

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Psychology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Psychology

by
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December 2012

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Keywords: Teasing, Mindfulness, Childhood Experience, Psychological Health

ABSTRACT

Withstanding Cruel Teasing: Does Dispositional Mindfulness Fortify Target Immunity?

by

Ruth Lewis

Cruel teasing can be pernicious for targets' psychological health. In this thesis I examined the extent to which trait mindfulness might mitigate the negative psychological effects associated with cruel teasing. Correlation results confirmed cruel teasing history related significantly and directly, and mindfulness inversely, to poorer psychological health. Moderated regression analyses confirmed that among targets of frequent cruel teasing those with high levels of mindfulness did not evidence the detrimental psychological effects as did those low in mindfulness. Subsequent moderated regression analyses with cruel teasing history, mindfulness, and sexual identity status suggest that when people are low in mindfulness cruel teasing experiences affect their psychological health systematically regardless of sexual identity. Discussion focuses on the role of mindfulness for well-being, particularly in mitigating the negative effects of cruel teasing for psychological health, the individual and social implications for promoting mindfulness, and other directions for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teasing is a ubiquitous part of social interaction. Sometimes teasing can be affiliatory. A funny quip among friends can bring them closer together. At other times teasing can be deleterious. As depicted in the following examples a cruel taunt between classmates can bring about hurt feelings and strong desires to retaliate.

“You should have heard what they said to me in middle school. It was awful. I felt like crying. Every day this boy would tell me I was ugly and nasty, and then he got other people to say it too. It was torture and a living hell.” (Calco, 2005).

“Why does everyone hate me because I am gay? I am scared and I am tired of being laughed at, made fun of...threatened and feeling like shit.” (Caruso, <http://www.suicide.org/suicide-note-of-a-gay-teen.html>).

Indeed, this latter quote was part of a note written in the moments preceding a suicide attempt. Kowalski’s (1998) participants similarly described times when they were the targets of cruel teases. Participants recounted episodes using phrases like “the most unforgettable experience of my life... still causing problems” and noted that the long-term consequences included “permanent scars...never really forgotten” (Kowalski, Howerton, & McKenzie, 2001, p. 192).

However, even in the face of cruel teasing events, not all people want to lash out against the perpetrator or experience the event as psychologically traumatic. Some individuals respond

in a manner that minimizes the impact of a tease and seem immune to its harmful effects. Borba (2001) provides examples:

Perpetrator: “You’re ugly and nasty.”

Target: “That’s your opinion. I think I’m okay.”

Perpetrator: “You’re a fag boy.”

Target: “So?”

Perpetrator: “You’re dumb.”

Target: “Yeah, but I’m good at it.”

What accounts for the differences in these responses to taunts? Why do some targets suffer while others do not? In this thesis, I examine individual difference traits that may inoculate people from the negative effects of cruel teasing. One such difference may be that of dispositional mindfulness. Specifically, I found that among those who have been frequent targets of cruel teasing, those with high levels of dispositional mindfulness did not suffer the detrimental psychological effects to the same extent as people with low levels of mindfulness, and that this qualification remained when controlling for other relevant variables such as the target’s sex and his or her level of social support.

Before describing the study in which I tested this possibility, I reviewed research on teasing, focusing on targets as members of a triadic relationship (i.e., target, perpetrator, and bystander). Then, I detailed theory and research on the construct of mindfulness. I focused particularly on the beneficial effects of mindfulness on markers of health and well-being. Finally, I detailed my specific hypotheses and the manner in which I tested them.

CHAPTER 2

TEASING

As noted by various theorists and researchers, teasing is easy to recognize but hard to operationally define. For instance Watts and Kowalski (1998) questioned people about behavior and characteristics most descriptive of teasers. Qualities mentioned ranged from “annoys and irritates others” to “has a sense of humor”, indicating the duality inherent in teasing. Teasing has been defined as “identity confrontation couched in humor” (Kowalski, 2003) and described as “permitted disrespect” (Pawluk, 1989; Radcliffe-Brown, 1940). Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, and Heerey (2001) define a tease as a provocation accompanied by playful markers in which one person intentionally albeit indirectly comments on something relevant to another. Some researchers consider teasing a common form of bullying, for example Boulton and Hawker (1997) explicitly refer to teasing as “verbal bullying.” Blumen (2008) sees verbal harassment as the type of bullying in which both boys and girls engage most often.

Other investigators, however, maintain that while teasing and bullying may be “cousins”, they are not synonymous concepts. Bullies tend to harass their victims chronically and unrelentingly; teasers usually limit themselves to fewer, less persistent provocations (Horowitz et al., 2004). Nonetheless, teasing is expressed in myriad ways, including direct and indirect provocation and behaviors such as poking or mimicking the target, inventing derogatory nicknames, swiping valued possessions, and a wide swath of other potentially aversive interpersonal behaviors (Keltner et al., 2001; Kowalski, 2000, 2004, 2007; Kowalski & Lakey, 2003; Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). Researchers suggest that cruel teasing may provoke interpersonal conflict, provide a means of social rejection, express aggression, or

convey the necessity to change some relevant aspect of the self (Aboud & Joong, 2008; Scrambler, Harris, & Milich, 1998).

Kowalski and Lakey (2003) note that some of the difficulty in defining teasing is due to the way the term “teasing” has been used as a “catch all” for aversive interpersonal events that vary relative to the perpetrator’s behavior and the target’s response. More specifically, they argue that teasing events require nuanced labels depicting the extent to which they are “prosocial” (i.e., “funny, ha-ha”) or “cruel”. Kowalski and Lakey (2003) provide a helpful four-dimensional model to describe teasing events and differentiate their prosocial or cruel nature: 1) how much humor is present in the tease?; 2) how ambiguous is the intent or meaning of the tease?; 3) how aggressive is the tease?; and 4) how much does the tease confront a salient aspect of the target’s identity? From a target’s perspective prosocial teasing entails high levels of humor and relatively low levels of ambiguity, aggression, and identity confrontation. Note that this model allows for different perspectives on these four dimensions associated with perpetrators, targets, and witnesses. A perpetrator may allege that some act was extremely high in humor and low in aggression, for example, whereas the target may find little or no humor in it. Furthermore, Kowalski and Lakey (2003) distinguish teasing from bullying by the proportion of ambiguity, humor, and identity confrontation present in the event. Relative to cruel teasing, bullying is characterized by particularly high identity confrontation coupled with exceptionally low humor and ambiguity.

Kowalski et al. (2001) expand on prior research (e.g., Shapiro, Baumeister, & Kessler, 1991; Mooney, Creeser, & Blatchford, 1991) in arguing that teasing may provide a means of socialization, self-disclosure, power, control, as well as self-presentation and identity regulation. In other words, teasing serves multiple and often ambiguous aims; thus, targets may be unsure

whether perpetrators' motives reflect camaraderie and a tease is just "for fun" or if intentions are malicious and a tease is meant "to hurt others" (Watts & Kowalski, 1998). Personal biases influence this judgment because teasing generally arises in contexts in which ongoing interactions between teaser and target deviate from a favored state. That is, norm violations and interpersonal conflicts disrupt desired conditions and prompt teasing (Keltner et al., 2001).

As demonstrated by Horowitz et al. (2004), certain types of norm violations are the most likely to lead to teasing events. These authors conducted focus groups with middle school students from various geographic areas to identify common sources of teasing. They found that physical appearance, personality traits, behavioral tendencies, family and environmental factors, and school related snafus could subjectively devalue targets and provide fodder for perpetrators, who often direct provocative, sarcastic, or ironic comments (Keltner et al., 2001) at ways in which the target is inherently "different." These dissimilarities include acts or anomalous physical attributes (e.g., being overweight), intellectual or social skills (e.g., being a "brain" or a "nerd"), sexual identity (i.e., identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer [LGBTQ]), status differences (e.g., being poor), or other peripheral features relevant to the target (e.g., the target's lack of important belongings) (Eisenberg, 1986; Shapiro et al., 1991; Siegel, 1995; Straehle, 1993). Kowalski (2003) reports that, unfortunately, "Some people even downplay any abilities that make them stand out from the crowd for fear of being teased" (p. 70).

Teasing is common and perhaps ubiquitous. Mooney et al. (1991) indicate that 96% of 7 and 11 year olds have experienced teasing at school; typically, perpetrators called them names or made remarks about their appearance or race (Kowalski et al., 2001). The U.S. Department of Education's *1999 Annual Report on School Safety* revealed that over 30% of 11-, 13-, and 15-year-olds in the United States have been the direct target of comments, gestures, or jokes.

According to *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2009*, an annual report produced by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Center for Education Statistics, in 2007, 21% percent of students surveyed said that they had been made fun of, that is, teased. In elementary and middle schools dominant social group members, bullies, and popular children usually instigate teasing (Shapiro et al., 1991). Teasing topics change as children develop, depending upon issues currently relevant to a particular age group. For instance, possessiveness and aggression are pertinent to preschool children (Dunn & Brown, 1994; Miller, 1986; Schieffelin, 1986). Elementary school children tease about associations with members of the opposite sex (Thorne, 1993; Thorne & Luria, 1986). Teasing during puberty focuses on fashion and dating (Eder, 1991); adolescents tend to be concerned with experimental sex and drug use (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998). Although researchers have not yet collected data on the prevalence of teasing in adulthood, Kowalski and colleagues (e.g., Kowalski et al., 2001) speculate that adult teasing probably occurs as often as teasing among nonadults. Teasing in adulthood differs in form; content tends to concentrate on personal weaknesses and sexual relationships (Kowalski, 2003; Kowalski et al., 2001).

Despite the challenge of satisfactorily defining “teasing”, teasing events all include a perpetrator conveying a pointed albeit ambiguous comment towards or about a target. In all cases, factors (e.g., uncertainty about the intent) intrinsic to teasing make it possible for the target to experience negative interpersonal and psychological effects. By way of identity confrontation and aggression, cruel teasing carries potentially pernicious consequences for its targets.

Anderson and Bushman’s (2002) general aggression model (GAM) provides one relevant framework for understanding why being the target of aggressive behavior may be so harmful. Specifically, aggression within the GAM is defined as “any behavior directed toward another

individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm” (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 28). Kowalski and Lakey (2003) even offer evidence that teasing events rated by targets as “prosocial” can lead to negative emotions, hurt feelings, and relational distance. Adding to the interpersonal complexity of teasing is the way recipients interpret the ambiguity inherent in an identity confrontation, a factor that determines its impact upon the target’s self-esteem (Kowalski et al, 2001). As such, the power of teasing over psychological health resides not only in the objective nature of the teasing interaction but also in targets’ subjective experience and response to the tease.

Keltner et al. (1998) asserts that off-record markers influence aversive or affiliative outcomes and must accompany provocations in order for those remarks to be defined as teasing. In contrast to direct, appropriate on-record communication (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Clark, 1996; Grice, 1975), off-record makers contain implicit meanings (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and deviate from straightforward behavior. Examples of off-record markers employed by teasers include referring to someone present in the second person, exaggerating facial expressions (Keltner et al., 1998), mimicking mannerisms (Morgan, 1996), and winking (Eisenberg, 1986). Voice changes or inflections can signify that targets are meant to take perpetrators’ comments as jests. Perpetrators may elongate vowels, speak with a sing-song cadence, use emphatic stress, deliver words in a loud, rapid manner, dramatize sighs, follow preceding comments with louder or quieter remarks, or employ sundry other techniques. Teasers may imply or even explicitly state that their utterances are not to be taken seriously. They may also use laughter (Keltner & Bonanno, 1997), friendly physical contact, eye contact, or even include “hidden compliments” in the tease to convey the same (Keltner et al., 1998). Thus, the

way targets perceive the implicit meaning contained in these off-record markers may influence their response to being teased.

The target's age may also be a factor in how accurately the person apprehends the intention behind an ambiguous, humorous identity confrontation. (Kowalski et al., 2001, 2003; Warm, 1997). At about 8 years of age, children show improvement in the apprehension of others' mental states, an ability related to Fonagy's concept of "mentalization" (Fonagy, Steele, Moran, Steele, & Higgitt, 1991; Fonagy & Target, 1998). Mentalization involves taking an inquisitive stance towards the actions of oneself and others and interpreting those behaviors as meaningful on the basis of intentional desires, needs, feelings, beliefs, and reasons (Allen, 2003; Fonagy et al., 1991). At this developmental stage youth also acquire the capacity to experience conflicting emotions at the same time (Harter & Whitesell, 1990). Thus, their ability to perceive intended meanings underlying teasing improves considerably (Perner & Wimmer, 1985; Winner & Leekam, 1991). Targets who have more fully developed mentalization abilities and can tolerate mixed emotions may respond to the ambiguous nature of a tease with a clearer perception of perpetrators' motivations.

Researchers have identified other variables that influence the adversity of effects on recipients, such as past history with teasing, current affect, perceived meaning, evaluation of the threat, and one's ability to cope with it (Kowalski et al., 2001; Ross 1996). How severely teasing events damage target's self-image often seems to depend upon these factors. For example, the negative effects of teasing depend upon how frequently teasing occurs (Besag, 1989; Hargreaves, 1967), how significant the perpetrator is to the target (Hargreaves, 1967), the extent to which the relationship seems devalued (Kowalski, 2000; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998), and even where the event occurs. In fact, whether or not the confrontation takes place in public

or private and if the target's peers bolster the perpetrator's acts or defend the target affects the outcomes associated with it (Hargreaves, 1967). Personal relevance of the "attack" (Drew, 1987) or feeling empathy from others about the experience (Kowalski et al., 2001) affects the likelihood of a negative reaction.

Other factors help determine the nature and consequences of teasing events. For example, although gender differences are smaller than researchers have expected (Keltner et al., 1998), in general men experience fewer negative reactions to teasing and tease more often than women (Alberts, Kellar-Guenther, & Corman, 1996; Eisenberg, 1986; Hopper, Knapp, & Scott, 1981; Keltner et al., 1998; Kowalski, 1998). Women tend to feel guiltier than men about cruel teasing, perhaps because they are typically more concerned about adverse consequences to valued relationships (Elder 1991).

Traits and features of perpetrators often convey something about their motives, which affects constructive or detrimental nature of the teasing outcome. Anderson and Bushman (2002), for example, reviewed broad and diverse literature to demonstrate that person factors such as individual differences, i.e. personality traits, sex, beliefs, attitudes, values, long-term goals and behavioral scripts, as well as situation factors such as environmental cues, provocations, frustrations, immediate pains or discomforts, or drugs and incentives increase the likelihood of behaving aggressively. Thus, the aggressive motive underlying teasing may stem from these same factors. Against this backdrop some perpetrators, such as those with fragile high self-esteem (Kernis, 2003), may garner short-term positive effects from their actions. People with fragile high self-esteem possess positive feelings of self-worth overall, but it is unstable either because it is contingent on meeting outcomes or standards or because it is paired with low self-esteem implicitly (i.e., "deep down" inside). Cruelly teasing another person, and thereby

exerting power or influence over the target, may facilitate a temporary increase or buttress to feelings of self-worth; this behavior may reflect a drive to exert power and influence over the target or it may reflect a desire to divert attention away from a personal shortcoming (Kernis, 2003; Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1993). People high in trait hostility also frequent commit aversive interpersonal acts of aggression, such as cruel teasing; on the other hand, persons who are concerned with others' feelings are generally empathetic, agreeable, and sensitive and they tend to tease gently and infrequently (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988). Thus, the perpetrator's general personality traits will influence the outcomes associated with the event and the likelihood that a target will make benign or malevolent attributions for it.

Status differences and social context may also influence outcomes associated with teasing events. In casual or familiar situations, perpetrators are more likely to tease aggressively than in formal situations. High status exchanges and formal occasions invoke less hostile teasing perhaps because both perpetrators and targets become concerned about maintaining a sense of dignity tied into a positive "face", that is, "an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (Goffman, 1955, p. 213). Within these contexts ambiguity prevails, so the target of a tease may be unsure of the perpetrator's motivations and how to respond.

The public or private nature of the tease also influences greatly the outcomes associated with it. Increasingly, electronic and digital media, which establish a widespread public medium for attacking targets, have been used to convey teases. In fact, Ybarra (2006) conducted a survey of 10 to 17 year olds and found that 4% reported being targeted via the Internet with acts that typify cruel teasing. Perpetrators of cruel teasing transmit slander or even threats through e-mail, instant messaging, video-games, chat rooms, social sites, or text messages, which provides them

with an oblique communication strategy whereby they can avoid direct confrontation while controlling the tone and nature of the message (Peters, Kowalski, & Malesky, 2010).

Harmful cyber-messages intended to undermine a target's reputation may be more damaging than face-to-face encounters, which tend to remain amongst a limited group. Text messages, on the other hand, may be almost instantaneously distributed to a vast audience (Strom & Strom, 2005). Public scorn from cruel teasing may lead to violent confrontations that may not have occurred in a private setting. Some targets have attempted to escape the deep shame they experience by resorting to suicide (Kowalski, et al., 2001, Kowalski, 2003). Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2004) hypothesize that observers play an active and crucial role in school bullying, a theory that might be extended to teasing behavior. In support, Marano (1998) found that in 85% of malicious teasing incidents bystanders had observed the event. When observers intervened they were often effective; indeed, 57% of interventions stopped bullying within 10 seconds (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). The same is likely true for teasing events. Furthermore, an observer who intervenes is more apt to do so in the future (Craig & Pepler, 1995).

In an experiment designed to investigate observers' perceptions of prosocial teasing, cruel teasing, and bullying, Kowalski and Lakey (2003) found that observers perceived more negative emotional reactions among targets of cruel teasing than prosocial teasing and thought the perpetrator had more empathy in prosocial teasing than either cruel teasing or bullying. This study highlights the variation in observers' perceptions that may impact how and when they respond to altercations. Unfortunately, so-called defenders intervene on targets' behalf in only one fourth of cases (O'Connell et al., 1999). Given this lack of intervention, targets are usually left to interpret a tease on their own and to cope with potentially negative effects.

Short-term, and more significantly, long-term, unfavorable outcomes often befall targets of persistent cruel teasing. For example, Nishina, Juvonen, and Witkow (2005) followed a sample of 6th-grade students and found that cruel teasing by peers of a stressful and harassing nature (e.g., being called bad names) was linked with depression, anxiety, loneliness, lower global self-worth, and somatic symptoms (e.g., stomachaches). These detrimental outcomes consequently affected school functioning including both lower attendance and poorer grades for those frequently targeted. Socially anxious individuals often are easier targets than those who are not socially anxious, and teasing events exacerbate feelings of apprehension and insecurity (Peters et al., 2010). When perpetrators direct ridicule towards particularly central aspects of targets' identities, targets often experience extreme embarrassment or shame (Mooney et al., 1991; Pearce, 1989; Ross, 1996) that can manifest in psychological disorders like social anxiety disorder (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008). Indeed, targets' often quiet and reserved nature and their sensitivity to the potential of interpersonal rejection (Kowalski et al., 2001) sets the stage for clinical depression, behaviors indicative of learned helplessness, and drops in their self-esteem; sadly, these detrimental effects often persist into adulthood (Hazler, 1994; Hazler et al., 1993; Kowalski, 2000).

Both the immediate as well as the long-term, chronic outcomes of cruel teasing are not limited to psychological problems; rather, cruel teasing often affects targets' physical health and well-being. For instance, Sourander et al. (2010) conducted a cross-sectional study of 13- to 16-year old students and cyberteasing (i.e., being teased or ridiculed in an online format). These authors believed that teasing in cyberspace differs from teasing in "live" space in that traditional teasing tends to occur during the school day, allowing targets respite from harassment for certain time periods. Because cyberteasing makes targets constantly accessible, the negative effects may

be particularly harmful. As expected, Sourander et al. (2010) found evidence that cybervictimization related to difficulties with emotion regulation, poor concentration, interpersonal difficulties (e.g., not getting along with other people), and perceptions of the school as unsafe. They also documented significant somatic manifestations among targets, including frequent headaches, recurrent abdominal pain, and sleeping difficulties. Libbey, Story, Neumark-Sztainer, and Boutelle (2008) likewise found that overweight adolescents who were frequently teased not only experienced severe depression, but they often developed severe binge eating disorders as well. Similarly, Thompson, Cattarin, Fowler, and Fisher (1995) indicate that adults who were teased about their weight when young subsequently developed poor body images and eating disorders (broadly defined) later in life. Recent evidence suggests that the effects of cruel and harassing behavior may be the most pernicious for those who are targeted for their sexual identity. Indeed, the recent story of Ryan Halligan (<http://www.ryanpatrickhalligan.org/>) and other empirical evidence (e.g., Hinduja & Patchin, 2009) shed light on the severity of cruelty that LGBTQ individuals can suffer and they point to the markedly higher likelihood that LGBTQ individuals will turn to suicide as a means of escape.

Importantly, some individuals do not seem to suffer psychological harms after being cruelly teased. Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchán, Calmaestra, and Vega (2009), for example, studied 1,671 Spanish adolescents to examine the emotional impact of school ridicule (including cyberbullying). Their results indicated that targets evinced a polarized response to cruel teasing; either targets experienced no lasting emotional affliction or they suffered from a wide variety of negative emotions including fear, sadness, and embarrassment. Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2000) suggest that the people who are “not bothered” in response to the harassment inherent to cruel teasing may possess some sort of dispositional trait or “personal capacity” to

cope that mitigates the negative feelings experienced by others, though they did not theorize about the nature of this “personal capacity”. One possibility is that targets might view teasing events as situations that enhanced their empathy for others or helped them hone social skills to respond to inappropriate remarks in the future. Perhaps benevolent attributional tendencies allow some targets to experience positive emotional or interpersonal outcomes in the face of cruel teasing. Another possibility, which I discuss in the next section, may be that these unaffected targets were higher in dispositional mindfulness.

CHAPTER 3

MINDFULNESS

Brown and Ryan (2003) define mindfulness as a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience. Kabat-Zinn (1994) introduced this construct as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.10). This quality of consciousness can be a trait—a dispositional tendency to be more mindful—as well as a temporary state induced by meditative practice or other techniques.

A concept originating in Buddhist psychology, the term “mindfulness” derives from the Pali language, specifically the word *sati*, meaning, “to remember” (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Interestingly, “remembering” that one is not in a state of mindfulness—caught up in the past or future—is indicative of a mindful state. An inherent, meta-cognitive ability amenable to cultivation, mindfulness promotes being fully in the present rather than selectively experiencing it (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

The “awareness” aspect of mindfulness involves conscious registration of stimuli; “attention” implies noticing events. The mindful quality of consciousness is characterized by “lucid” awareness (Das, 1997; Gunaratana, 2002; Sogyal, 1993) of internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment. This impartial, receptive state encourages insights into one’s own and others’ thoughts, emotions, and intuitions, enabling deliberate, productive responses to life’s conflicts (Tart, 1994). In addition, mindful awareness is concrete and unbiased, in contrast to a conceptual, interpretive cognitive processing style, which compares, categorizes and evaluates experience (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Teasdale, 1999). Typically, subjective experience consists of perceptual reactions to thoughts, feelings, and internal and external events in which objects and experiences are appraised as “good” or “bad” in relation to

the self. Mindful awareness promotes perception without labeling or ego involvement; therefore, a target higher in mindful awareness might be less likely to respond defensively to the identity confrontation inherent in a tease.

These reactions, often conditioned by previous experience, are unwittingly assimilated into existing schemas. In other words, individuals' stances towards reality are not impartial but filtered through self-focused thoughts and prior experience. In contrast, persons in mindful, receptive states merely take note of what is currently taking place, including thoughts and emotions, which are attended to as objects and are thus less susceptible to prejudicial bias (e.g., Niemiec, Brown, & Ryan, 2006). Mindfulness, therefore, may be important in modifying targets' subjective experience and response to cruel teasing, ultimately promoting better psychological health.

The mindful processing mode moves flexibly between focused attention and comprehensive vision (Cullen, 2006; Welwood, 1996), which facilitates an objective, empirical position towards life (e.g., Rahula, 1974; Smith & Novak, 2004). Stated differently, while observing and participating in experiences, one is also aware of emotions and physical sensations yet, at the same time, without becoming engrossed in them. Research suggests that this mindful approach increases self-compassion as well as empathy for others (Beitel, Ferrer & Cecero, 2005; Neff, 2003; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2006; Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner, 1998). As noted earlier, empathetic people tend to tease less often and more kindly (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Slugoski & Turnball, 1988).

Researchers have associated individual differences capacity for attention and dispositional mindfulness with genetic variants (Parasuraman & Greenwood, 2004; Way, Creswell, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2006). Environmental influences also seem to affect the

development of mindfulness (Greenough and Black, 1992). Physical and sexual abuse, excessive parental control, and social contexts that promote ego-involvement and contingent self-worth may all inhibit emerging mindful traits (Bronson, 2000; Fonagy & Target, 1997; Ryan, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2004). Although mindfulness is believed to be an inherent capacity of human beings (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Goldstein, 2002; Kabat-Zinn, 2003), it varies in stability and continuity from temporary states to sustained conditions. Shapiro, Oman, Thoresen, Plante, and Flinders, (2008) offer preliminary evidence that meditation-based interventions can cultivate mindfulness, measured by the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Participants who adhered to practices taught during this study showed increases in mindfulness, which mediated reductions in perceived stress and rumination.

Importantly, mindfulness is distinct both theoretically (e.g., Brown et al., 2008) and empirically (e.g., Lakey et al., 2008) from other constructs that address consciousness or those that speak to various aspects of self-regulation. For instance, as a self-awareness theory, mindfulness seems similar to “reflexive self-consciousness” proposed by a number of theorists (e.g., Buss, 1980; Carver & Scheier, 1981; 1998; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). However, mindfulness is experiential, whereas self-consciousness is analytical (Teasdale, 1999). In other words, self-consciousness tends to be goal-directed and concerned with self-regulation through control. Likewise, self-conscious individuals behave in ways that reflect their need for preservation and enhancement of identity. Often they relate experiences back to themselves, continually asking questions like: *How does this make me look?; What will they think?; or What’s in it for me?* (Brown et al., 2007). In contrast, individuals high in “internal state awareness” tend to be introspective and have a deeper understanding of their current emotional state. Self-reflexiveness appears to be maladaptive, whereas internal state awareness shows

conceptual and empirical convergence with mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and as a self-regulatory means, has compelling positive effects on psychological, physical, motivational, and interpersonal functioning (Brown et al., 2007).

Mindfulness and self-control also are fundamentally different means of self-regulation (Ryan, 1993). Healthy self-regulation is an important factor in, for example, successfully meeting desired outcomes and accomplishing goals. However, self-controlled activities are not those that are intrinsically motivated, but instead they derive from and serve to satisfy self-image concerns rooted in social or cultural ideals (Moller, Deci, & Ryan, 2006). In contrast, mindful self-regulation occurs via the awareness and integration of momentary experience; this immediate, authentic contact with current reality occurs when people align their behaviors with their values and beliefs. Thus, people who self-regulate in a mindful manner tend to find the process (and not just the outcome) rewarding in and of itself. Stated differently, in such an experiential mode of conscious processing, behaviors tends to be autonomously regulated and in accord with chosen interests and values rather than controlled by external forces or pressures. As such, mindful regulation is vitalizing and energizing (Brown & Ryan, 2003), while self-controlled regulation promotes behaving in a defensive or retaliatory manner when faced of self-threat (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003; Lakey, Kernis, Heppner, & Lance, 2008; Levesque & Brown, 2007) and is energy depleting (e.g., Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). Autonomously regulated, mindful behavior underlies task perseverance, sets the stage for optimal performance, and increases enjoyment (e.g., Moller et al., 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Because of the manner in which mindful people regulate their lives, they can “simply” observe and monitor internal and external events unfettered by ego-enhancing motives (e.g., self-focused goal selection and pursuit). In contrast, people relatively low in mindfulness often are

led by ego-enhancing motives. To escape the sense of pressure, tension, and instability these motives or other threats to the self-concept engender (Brown et al., 2007), those low in mindfulness often attempt to hide negative traits or behaviors from conscious awareness intrapsychically and keep them hidden interpersonally. The nonjudgmental, nonlabeling quality of mindfulness promotes acceptance rather than avoidance of painful aspects of inner and outer experience and may allow individuals to access and accept disagreeable aspects of the self. In response to cruel teasing, it seems likely that a target of cruel teasing who is high in mindfulness will be less apt than those low in mindfulness to experience shame when taunted about personal differences or less likely to adopt a positive face in high status social situations.

A large body of evidence is emerging from psychometric, induction, and intervention methodologies that provides evidence that mindfulness enhances mental and physical health, psychological well-being, behavioral regulation, and inter-personal relationships. For instance, mindfulness plays a role in affect regulation, a process essential for mental health. That is, in a receptive, nonjudgmental state of awareness, stimuli—especially emotionally threatening events, such as cruel teasing—are merely regarded rather than analyzed or controlled (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2007; Gross & Munoz, 1995). Skillfully correcting or repairing disagreeable mood states such as anxiety and depression might enable victims of cruel teasing to recover faster with more stability after a verbal attack.

Evidence from numerous studies has shown that mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions may produce changes in clinical markers of health, including reduced stress, lower blood pressure, and enhanced immune system responsiveness (Barnes, Davis, Murzynowski, & Treiber, 2004; Davidson et al., 2003; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1998;). Mindfulness may lessen the

detrimental effects of teasing on victims' health, e.g. eating disorders. When individuals' actions are well regulated, more choices become accessible to them and their responses to events tend to be versatile and adaptive. Higher mindfulness appears to deter automatic, habitual, impulsive reactions (Bishop et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2004) allowing individuals to interrupt and refrain from undesired behaviors or maladaptive decisions (Lakey, Campbell, Brown, & Goodie, 2007). It seems likely that someone with a mindful disposition would be less likely to consider suicide or violent retaliation as the only befitting responses to prolonged cruel teasing.

Mindfulness may also increase awareness of cognitions, emotions, and verbal responses to interpersonal communication. Witnessing thoughts and emotions prevents impulsive or destructive reactions to others' comments (Boorstein, 1996). In fact, people high in mindfulness are less verbally defensive than those low in mindfulness in response to questions about negative life events (Lakey et al., 2008) and less likely to become aggressive in response to social rejection (Heppner et al., 2008). Creswell, Eisenberger, and Lieberman (2006) argue that mindfulness elicits equanimity that protects individuals from the distress of social exclusion and reduces their reactivity to social threat. In support, Barnes et al. (2007) found that people high in mindfulness evidence inhibited physiological reactivity and lower levels of stress markers prior to experiencing interpersonal conflict, and they experience relatively low emotional stress in response to it. Collectively, these findings suggest that mindfulness may help inoculate people against the toxic outcomes associated with the experience of chronic stress and immediate distress. They also clarify the influence of mindfulness on self-concept especially in social situations. When an individual's personal identity and self-worth depend on evaluation and validation by others, negative reactions to rejection tend to occur (e.g. Leary, 2004). Mindfulness seems to cultivate a deeper sense of self, grounded in experiential awareness, which does not feel

endangered by negative events like malicious teasing. Thus, the evidence suggests mindfulness's benefits include insight, low egoic attachment, and enhanced functioning (Brown et al., 2007) that could lessen the sting of cruel teasing and thereby fortify targets from detriments to psychological health that often ensue.

CHAPTER 4

THE CURRENT STUDY

The preceding evidence strongly suggests that a history of cruel teasing can have damaging consequences to targets' long-term psychological health, though relatively little research has looked at variables that may fortify targets from these effects. The evidence suggests that mindfulness may be one such variable. In the present study, subjects completed measures of teasing history, dispositional mindfulness, and psychological health. I assessed psychological health using a broad range of questionnaires for psychological pathology (posttraumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal behavior) and psychological health (psychological well-being, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and vitality). In support of previous research (Besag, 1989; Hargreaves, 1967; Hazler, 1994; Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1993; Kowalski, 2000, 2001, 2003; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Libbey, Story, Neumark-Sztainer, & Boutelle, 2008; Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005; Peters et al., 2010; Thompson, Cattarin, Fowler, & Fisher, 1995;), I expected to find that targets of frequent cruel teasing evidence greater psychological health problems than those who were not frequent targets. I also expected that participants' mindfulness scores would moderate this relation. Specifically, I hypothesized that among frequent targets of cruel teasing, those with high levels of dispositional mindfulness would not evidence the detrimental psychological effects to the same extent as targets with low levels of mindfulness, and that this qualification would remain when controlling for other relevant variables (i.e., gender, marital status, ethnicity, and social support). In light of the evidence that sexual identity represents one potentially stigmatizing self-aspect with particular relevance for cruel teasing (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009), I also explored the possibility that relations among mindfulness, cruel teasing, and psychological health differed systematically

as a function of sexual minority status. Specifically, I believed it possible that mindfulness would be especially important for the psychological of sexual minority participants who have been the targets of frequent cruel teasing.

Method

Participants

Students ($N = 355$) from the East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Department of Psychology subject pool participated in this study. In return for their participation, students received credit for partial completion of their course research requirement. The majority of the sample was female 68.5%; likewise, 90.7% of participants were not married, 85.9% were white / Caucasian Americans, and 10.1% of participants identified as a sexual minority. All participants were native English speakers.

Procedure

Data were gathered using the online Sona research software employed by the ETSU Department of Psychology. Students logged on to the study's Sona website, and noted that because no identifying information would be maintained, continuing conveyed their consent. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire as well as measures for teasing history, mindfulness, psychological health, and other relevant variables.

Measures

Demographics. Participants began by answering demographic questions about their age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, and sexual identity. These data served as control variables along with the social support variable described below.

Social Support. Social support was by measured by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley's (1988) Perceived Social Support (PSS) scale. This scale assesses perceptions of social support

from family, friends, and one's significant other. Respondents answered 12 items (e.g., "*I can count on my friends when things go wrong.*") using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very strongly disagree*; 7 = *very strongly agree*). Scores were averaged such that higher scores indicated higher levels of perceived social support ($M = 5.29$; $SD = 1.58$; $\alpha = .97$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000; Zimet, Powell, Farley, Werkman, & Berkoff, 1990).

Teasing History. Teasing history was measured using an adapted version of the Teasing Questionnaire-Revised (TQ) developed by Storch et al. (2004). Participants were instructed to think about their lives prior to coming to college, and they responded to 29 items addressing the frequency of their teasing history (e.g., "*I was cruelly teased about being 'nerdy'.*") using a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = *very rarely or almost never*, 5 = *very often or almost always*). Given the noted ambiguity surrounding the definition of a tease and the distinction between prosocial and cruel teases (Kowalski & Lakey, 2003), I added the word "*cruelly*" to the question prompts. Scores were summed; higher scores indicated more frequent teasing history ($M = 43.5$; $SD = 17.7$; $\alpha = .96$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Storch et al., 2004; Strawser, Storch, & Roberti, 2005).

Mindfulness. Mindfulness was measured using Brown and Ryan's (2003) Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS). A number of self-report measures instruments have been developed to assess dispositional mindfulness in addition to the MAAS, including the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) (Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001), Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer et al., 2004), Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMS) (Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, & Laurenceau, 2007), and Southampton Mindfulness Questionnaire (SMQ) (Chadwick, Hember, Mead, Lilley, & Dagnan, 2005).

However, the MAAS, which has a single-factor structure, assesses the receptive attentional presence to on-going experience that Brown and Ryan (2003, 2004) maintain captures the central quality of mindfulness. The FMI, KIMS, CAMS-R, and SMQ, on the other hand, capture multiple components of mindfulness or appear to measure mindfulness skills (e.g., describing or labeling experience) that may be developed in therapeutic or meditative contexts. On the MAAS, participants normally responded to 15 items (e.g., “*I find myself doing things without paying attention.*”) using a 6-point scale that indicates the frequency of each experience (1 = *very frequently*, 6 = *not at all*). However, one item was inadvertently omitted from the response set, so participants answered 14 MAAS items in this study. Points were averaged such that higher scores reflected greater mindfulness ($M = 3.89$; $SD = 1.14$; $\alpha = .95$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Brown, Loverich, & Biegel, 2011; Carlson & Brown, 2005; MacKillop & Anderson, 2007).

Psychological Pathology. Levels of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were assessed with a modified form of Blake et al. (1995) Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS). The CAPS is a PTSD inventory based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th Edition (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 1999) diagnostic criteria. We used the 17 items that assess the frequency and intensity of the core PTSD symptoms. Participants responded using 5-point scales to the frequency (0 = *never*; 4 = *daily or almost every day*) and intensity (0 = *mild*; 4 = *extreme*) of the symptoms experienced within the past month (Hovens et al., 1994). In addition to the 1-month timeframe, I prompted respondents to respond to items with specific reference to the teasing events noted in the TQ-R; thus, this measure reflects PTSD symptoms associated specifically with participants’ cruel teasing histories. I created a total severity score by computing the average of the product of the frequency and intensity scores for each item ($M =$

3.43; $SD = 2.82$; $\alpha = .94$). This metric provides a continuous, global functioning score, which is appropriate for research purposes, instead of using diagnostic category cut-offs (Blake et al., 1995; Shalev, Freedman, Peri, Brandes, & Sahar, 1997). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (Weathers, Keane, & Davidson, 2001; Weathers, Ruscio, & Keane, 1999).

Levels of general anxiety were assessed with the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988). The BAI assesses the past-week frequency of anxiety-relevant symptoms (e.g., *nervous*; *indigestion*) using a 4-point scale (0 = *not at all*; 3 = *severely – it bothered me a lot*). Items were summed such that higher scores reflect higher levels of anxiety ($M = 11.20$; $SD = 11.61$; $\alpha = .95$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Beck et al., 1988)

Levels of depression were measured using the Center for Epidemiological Studies – Depression Scale (CESD) (Radloff, 1977). This scale assesses depressive symptomology using 20 items (e.g., *“I felt lonely.”*) with instructions for respondents to indicate the symptom frequency over the prior week using a 4-point scale (0 = *rarely or none of the time; less than 1 day*; 3 = *most or all of the time; 5-7 days*). Scores were summed such that higher scores indicated higher depression levels ($M = 15.58$; $SD = 10.49$; $\alpha = .90$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Lilly, Valdez, & Graham-Bermann, 2011).

Suicidal behaviors were assessed with Osman et al. (2001) Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire – Revised (SBQ-R). The SBQ-R includes four items. The first item (SBQ-Attempts; *“Have you ever thought about or attempted to kill yourself?”*) addresses suicidal attempts, and participants respond using a 6-point scale (1 = *never*; 6 = *I have attempted to kill myself, and really hoped to die*) ($M = 1.77$; $SD = 1.21$). The second item (SBQ-Ideation; *“How*

often have you thought about killing yourself in the past year?”) addresses suicidal ideation, and participants responded using a 5-point scale (1 = *Never*; 5 = *Very Often*) ($M = 1.48$; $SD = .93$). The third item (SBQ-Threat; *“Have you ever told someone that you were going to commit suicide, or that you might do it?”*) addresses interpersonal conveyance of the threat of suicide intent, and participants responded using a 5-point scale (1 = *No*; 5 = *Yes, more than once, and I really wanted to do it*) ($M = 1.31$; $SD = .79$). The fourth item (SBQ-Future; *“How likely is it that you will attempt suicide someday?”*) addresses the future likelihood of suicide, and participants responded using a 6-point scale (1 = *Never*; 6 = *Very likely*) ($M = 1.41$; $SD = .92$). I also computed a total suicide risk score (SBQ-Total), but because the item scales were not equal (i.e., two items used 5-point scales and two items used 6-point scales), I created a z score composite by averaging the z-scores of the individual items ($M = 0.00$; $SD = .83$; $\alpha = .84$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Osman et al., 2001).

Psychological Health. Psychological well-being was measured using Ryff’s (1989) multidimensional Psychological Well-Being Scale. This scale assesses well-being across six dimensions: including autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relations with others, mastery, and growth. Participants responded to 18 statements (e.g., *“People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.”*) using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Scores were summed such that higher scores reflected greater overall psychological well-being ($M = 76.72$; $SD = 14.53$; $\alpha = .86$). Note that researchers use both individual dimension scores and overall scores when discussing well-being (see Ryff & Keyes, 1995); in light of my interest in psychological well-being as a broad outcome, I used the total score for analyses. A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Kernis, Lakey, & Heppner, 2008).

Global feelings of self-worth were assessed with Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. The RSE uses 10 items (e.g., "*I feel like a person who has a number of good qualities.*") to which participants responded based on how they typically feel about themselves using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*). Scores were summed such that higher scores reflect higher self-esteem ($M = 37.46$; $SD = 7.89$; $\alpha = .89$). Numerous studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

Life satisfaction was assessed using Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin's (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The SWLS includes five items (e.g., "*I am satisfied with my life.*") to which respondents agree or disagree using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *strongly*). Scores were summed such that higher scores indicated higher levels of life satisfaction ($M = 22.73$; $SD = 7.64$; $\alpha = .92$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Pavot & Diener, 1993).

Vitality was assessed using an updated version of Ryan and Frederick's (1997) Vitality Scale. Respondents answered six items (e.g., "*Sometimes I feel so alive I just want to burst.*") using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not true at all*; 7 = *very true*). Scores were summed such that higher scores indicate higher levels of subjective vitality ($M = 31.98$; $SD = 9.71$; $\alpha = .90$). A number of studies attest to the validity of this measure (e.g., Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999). ($M = 32$; $SD = 9.7$)

Data Analytic Strategy

Based on previous research (Storch et al., 2005), I hypothesized that teasing history would relate to current psychological health such that targets with a history of being cruelly teased will show higher levels of psychological pathology (e.g., depression) and lower levels of psychological health (e.g., life satisfaction) than people who were not frequent targets of teasing.

Based on previous research (e.g., Brown et al., 2008), I also hypothesized that mindfulness will correlate positively with markers of psychological health and inversely with markers of psychological pathology. To examine these possibilities, I first analyzed bivariate correlations among TQ scores, MAAS scores, and outcome variables.

I also hypothesized that mindfulness would moderate these teasing history-to-psychological health relations, and that this moderation would hold even when controlling for relevant covariates (e.g., PSS). To examine this possibility, I conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses where in separate analyses I regressed each psychological health variable onto covariates, TQ scores, MAAS scores, and the TQ \times MAAS product term. Covariates and main effect terms were entered in the first step, and the cross-product term (the TQ \times MAAS interaction) was entered in the second step. To reduce nonessential multicollinearity, I centered relevant variables (i.e., TQ and MAAS scores) and used these to compute the cross-product term (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). I plotted predicted values and conducted simple slopes analyses when statistically significant interaction terms were found.

Finally, I explored the possibility that the links between teasing history, mindfulness, and current psychological health may be extremely important for those persons with a potentially stigmatizing self-aspect, specifically, sexual minorities and whose teasing experiences may be particularly egregious. To examine this possibility, I conducted a series of exploratory hierarchical regression analyses wherein I regressed each psychological health variables onto covariates, TQ scores, MAAS scores, and a dichotomously or “dummy” coded variable reflecting *sexual identity status* (SIS; 0 = *sexual majority*, 1 = *sexual minority*). Covariates and main effect terms were entered in the first step, including sexual identity as a main effect in this set of analyses. I computed three cross-product terms from TQ, MAAS, and SIS, which I entered

in the second step (i.e., $TQ \times MAAS$, $TQ \times SIS$, and $MAAS \times SIS$ interactions). I computed a three-way interaction term ($TQ \times MAAS \times SIS$ interaction), which was entered in the third step. I again used the centered scores for TQ and MAAS to compute the two-way and three-way cross-product terms (Cohen et al., 2003). I plotted predicted values and conducted simple slopes analyses for statistically significant three-way interaction terms.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Primary Bivariate Correlation Analyses

Table 1 displays a correlation matrix of predictor and outcome scores.

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations Among Main Predictor Variables, Exploratory Predictor Variable, and Criterion Variables

	TQ	MAAS	SIS
Psychological Pathology			
CAPS	.61**	-.36**	.26**
BAI	.45**	-.35**	.18**
CESD	.52**	-.40**	.22**
SBQ-Attempts	.31**	-.27**	.28**
SBQ-Ideation	.25**	-.19**	.23**
SBQ-Threats	.25**	-.26**	.21**
SBQ-Future	.32**	-.16**	.30**
SBQ-Total	.34**	-.27**	.31**
Psychological Health			
PWB	-.31**	.30**	-.08
RSE	-.37**	.35**	-.11*
SWLS	-.30**	.30**	-.10
VS	-.36**	.34**	-.08

Note. TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale; CAPS = Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale; BAI = Beck Anxiety Inventory; CESD = Center for Epidemiological Studies – Depression Scale; SBQ = Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; PWB = Psychological Well-being Scale; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale; VS = Vitality Scale; SIS = Sexual Identity Status: 0 = sexual majority, 1 = sexual minority.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Storch et al., 2005), TQ correlated significantly with all the markers of psychological health, including CAPS ($r = .61$), BAI ($r = .45, p < .01$), CESD ($r = .52, p < .01$), SBQ-Attempts ($r = .31, p < .01$), SBQ-Ideation ($r = .25, p < .01$), SBQ-Threats ($r =$

.25, $p < .01$), SBQ-Future ($r = .32, p < .01$), and SBQ-Total ($r = .34, p < .01$). These correlations indicate that the more frequently an individual experienced cruel teasing in the past, the more negative psychological health outcomes including posttraumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors that person experiences in the present. Furthermore, TQ correlated significantly with PSW ($r = -.31, p < .01$), RSE ($r = -.37, p < .01$), SWLS ($r = -.30, p < .01$), and VS ($r = -.36, p < .01$) indicating that a history of cruel teasing is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being, lower self-esteem, less satisfaction with life, and lower vitality.

Higher scores on the MAAS likewise correlated significantly with negative psychological health outcomes measured by the CAPS ($r = -.36, p < .01$), BAI ($r = -.35, p < .01$), CESD ($r = -.40, p < .01$), SBQ-Attempts ($r = -.27, p < .01$), SBQ-Ideation ($r = -.19, p < .01$), SBQ-Threats ($r = -.26, p < .01$), SBQ-Future ($r = -.16, p < .01$), and SBQ-Total ($r = -.27, p < .01$). Consistent with previous research (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003), these correlations indicate that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with more positive psychological health outcomes including lower levels of posttraumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors. MAAS scores also correlated significantly with PSW ($r = .30, p < .01$), RSE ($r = .35, p < .01$), SWLS ($r = .30, p < .01$), and VS ($r = .34, p < .01$). Thus, the higher individuals' mindfulness the more likely they are to experience overall psychological well-being, have higher self-esteem, be satisfied with their lives, and feel a sense of personal vitality.

New to this study is the finding that TQ and MAAS correlated significantly ($r = .33$) such that individuals with particularly frequent cruel teasing experiences reported lower levels of mindfulness. See Table 2. Table 2 also displays a correlation matrix of predictor variables and outcome variables with covariates. At a broad level, these correlational findings in Table 2 align

with previous reports but in this case, reflecting a general lack of consistent correlations among these variables.

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations among Main Predictor Variables, Exploratory Predictor Variables, and Covariates

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. TQ	–						
2. MAAS	-.33**	–					
3. SIS	.28**	-.13*	–				
4. Gender	-.01	-.03	-.02	–			
5. Marital Status	.16**	-.05	.12*	.12*	–		
6. Ethnicity	.03	.05	-.05	-.13*	-.04	–	
7. PSS	-.30**	.26**	-.07	.15**	.04	.04	–

Note. TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale; SIS = Sexual Identity Status: 0 = sexual majority, 1 = sexual minority; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white /Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; PSS = Perceived Social Support.

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

TQ correlated with marital status ($r = .16, p < .01$) and PSS ($r = -.30, p < .01$), but not ethnicity or gender. MAAS correlated with PSS ($r = .26, p < .01$) but no other covariate. With respect to the outcome variables, gender only correlated significantly with PWB ($r = .12, p < .05$), such that women reported higher levels of overall psychological well-being than men. Marital status correlated with various markers of psychological pathology, such that those reporting being married endorsed lower levels of pathology including CAPS ($r = -.12, p < .05$), BAI ($r = -.15, p < .01$), CESD ($r = -.11, p < .01$), SBQ-Ideation ($r = -.15, p < .01$), and SBQ-Future ($r = -.11, p < .01$). Marital status did not correlate significantly with SBQ-Attempts, SBQ-Ideation, or SBQ-total, nor did it correlate with any marker of psychological health. Ethnicity did not correlate significantly with any predictor or outcome variable. PSS, on the other hand, correlated significantly with all predictor and dependent variables (all $r_s > |.25|$, all $p_s < .01$).

Primary Two-Way Moderated Regression Analyses

CAPS as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 3, TQ ($\beta = .52, t(348) = 11.7, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.15, t(348) = -3.4, p < .01$) both significantly predicted teasing-related CAPS scores, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported higher levels of PTSD symptoms, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly lower levels of PTSD symptoms. These main effects were qualified by a significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.12, t(347) = -2.5, p < .05$).

Table 3

Moderated Regression Analysis for CAPS on TQ, MAAS, and TQ \times MAAS Interaction

	CAPS			
	B	SE	β	R ² (Δ R ²)
Step 1				
Gender	.32	.25	.05	
Marital Status	.26	.40	.03	
Ethnicity	.60	.33	.07	
Social Support (PSS)	-.25	.08	-.14**	
TQ	2.40	.21	.52**	
MAAS	-.37	.11	-.15**	.42**
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	-.43	.18	-.12*	.43** (.01*)

Note. CAPS = Clinician Administered PTSD Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for CAPS is significant both among those low ($\beta = .60, p < .01$) and high ($\beta = .40, p < .01$) in mindfulness. Predicted values, shown in Figure 1, reveal that nonfrequent targets of cruel teasing who are high in mindfulness report the lowest CAPS scores. Nonfrequent targets low in mindfulness still fare better on CAPS scores than those frequently targeted. However, among people who were frequent targets of cruel

teasing, those high in mindfulness report markedly lower CAPS scores than those low in mindfulness. Individuals high in mindfulness were significantly less traumatized by cruel teasing events than those low in mindfulness.

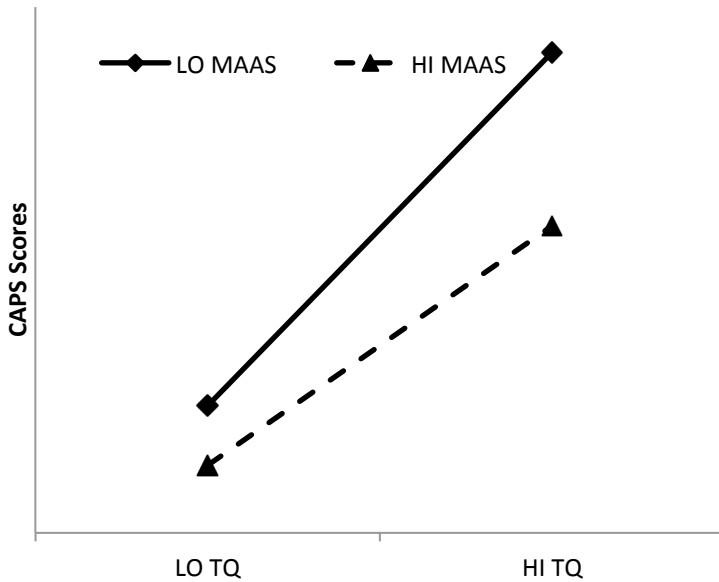


Figure 1. CAPS scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. CAPS = Clinician Administered PTSD Scale; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

BAI as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 4, TQ ($\beta = -.12, t(348) = -2.5, p < .05$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.12, t(348) = -2.5, p < .05$), both significantly predicted teasing-related anxiety, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported higher levels of anxiety symptoms, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly lower levels of anxiety symptoms. These main effects were qualified by a significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.12, t(347) = -2.5, p < .05$). Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for BAI is significant among those low in mindfulness ($\beta = .44, p < .01$) but not high in mindfulness ($\beta = .15, p = .10$). Predicted values, shown in Figure 2, demonstrate that anxiety does not differ among those high in mindfulness, regardless of cruel

teasing history. On the other hand, being frequently cruelly teased is particularly anxiety inducing for those low in mindfulness.

Table 4

Moderated Regression Analysis for BAI on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	BAI			R ² (ΔR ²)
	B	SE	β	
Step 1				
Gender	.07	.06	.06	
Marital Status	.15	.09	.08	
Ethnicity	-.07	.07	-.05	
Social Support (PSS)	-.05	.02	-.15**	
TQ	.30	.05	.33**	
MAAS	-.09	.02	-.19**	.28
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-.11	.04	-.15*	.29 (.02**)

Note. BAI = Beck Anxiety Inventory; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

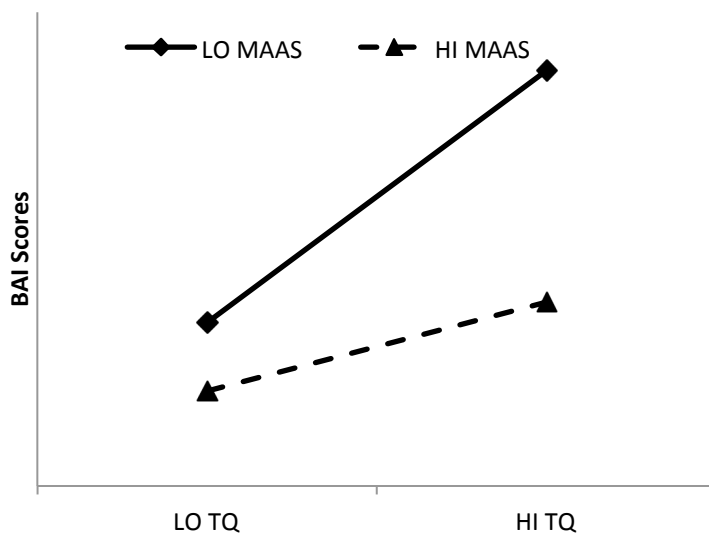


Figure 2. BAI scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. BAI = Beck Anxiety Inventory; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire. MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

CESD as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 5, TQ ($\beta = .38$, $t(348) = 8.3$, $p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.20$, $t(348) = -4.4$, $p < .01$) both significantly predicted depression symptoms, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported higher levels of depression, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly lower levels of depression. The TQ \times MAAS interaction was not statistically significant ($p = .10$).

Table 5

Moderated Regression Analysis for CESD on TQ, MAAS, and TQ \times MAAS Interaction

	CESD			
	B	SE	β	R ² (ΔR^2)
Step 1				
Gender	1.62	.96	.07	
Marital Status	.71	1.53	.02	
Ethnicity	-.70	1.27	-.02	
Social Support (PSS)	-1.82	.30	-.27**	
TQ	6.53	.78	.387**	
MAAS	-1.83	.41	-.20**	.40
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	.00	.67	.00	.40 (.00)

Note. CESD = Center for Epidemiological Studies – Depression Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

SBQ-Attempts as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 6, TQ ($\beta = .22$, $t(348) = 4.0$, $p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.16$, $t(348) = -2.9$, $p < .05$) both significantly predicted teasing-related suicidal attempts, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported higher likelihood of attempts, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly less likelihood of suicidal attempts. These main effects

were qualified by a marginally significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.10, t(347) = -1.71, p = .09$).

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for SBQ-Attempts is significant among those low ($\beta = .30, p < .01$) but not high in mindfulness ($\beta = .11, p = .28$). Predicted values, shown in Figure 3, reveal that the number of past suicide attempts do not differ among those high in mindfulness regardless of cruel teasing history. On the other hand, being frequently cruelly teased poses a particularly high risk for suicide attempts among those low in mindfulness.

Table 6

Moderated Regression Analysis for SBQ-Attempts on TQ, MAAS, and TQ \times MAAS Interaction

	SBQ-Attempts			
	B	SE	β	R ² (ΔR^2)
Step 1				
Gender	.21	.13	.08	
Marital Status	.39	.21	.10	
Ethnicity	-.03	.17	-.01	
Social Support (PSS)	-.09	.04	-.11*	
TQ	.43	.11	.22***	
MAAS	-.17	.06	-.16***	.15
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	-.16	.09	-.10 [†]	.16 (.01*)

Note. SBQ = Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

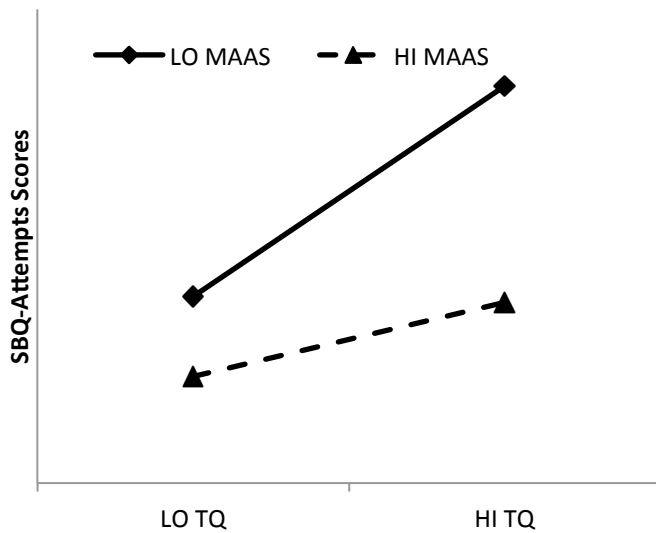


Figure 3. SBQ-Attempts scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. SBQ = Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

SBQ-Ideation as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 7, TQ ($\beta = .19, t(348) = 3.3, p < .01$) significantly predicted suicidal ideation; however, MAAS ($\beta = -.10, t(348) = 1.82, p = .07$) did not. Individuals who were cruelly teased frequently reported more suicidal ideation than those who were not frequently cruelly teased. This main effect was qualified by a marginally significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.11, t(347) = -1.88, p = .06$).

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for SBQ-Ideation is significant among those low in mindfulness ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) but not high in mindfulness ($\beta = .05, p = .61$). Predicted values, shown in Figure 4, show that the frequency of suicidal ideations do not differ among those high in mindfulness, regardless of cruel teasing history. On the other hand, being frequently cruelly teased poses a particularly high risk for suicide ideation among those low in mindfulness.

Table 7

Moderated Regression Analysis for SBQ-Ideation on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	SBQ-Ideation			R ² (ΔR ²)
	B	SE	β	
Step 1				
Gender	-.10	.10	-.03	
Marital Status	-.08	.17	-.02	
Ethnicity	-.05	.14	-.02	
Social Support (PSS)	-.07	.03	-.11*	
TQ	.28	.09	.19**	
MAAS	-.08	.05	-.10	.09
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-.14	.07	-.11 [†]	.10 (.01)

Note. SBQ = Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. [†] = $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

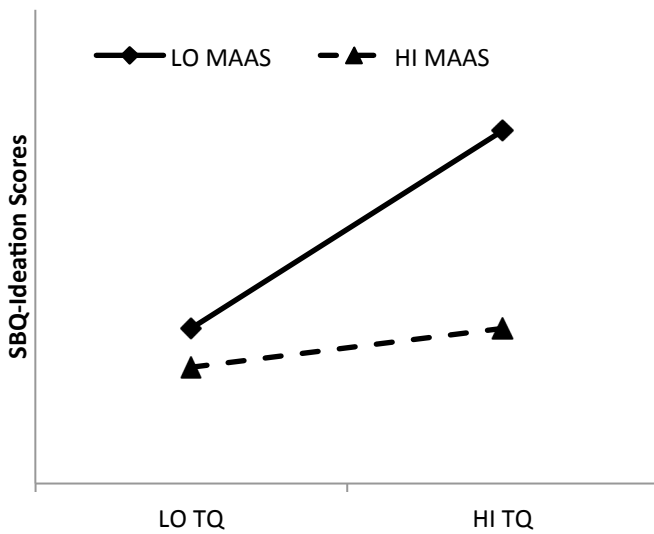


Figure 4. SBQ-Ideation scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. SBQ = Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

SBQ-Threats as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 8, TQ ($\beta = .15, t(348) = 2.80, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.18, t(348) = -3.20, p < .01$) both significantly predicted teasing-related suicidal threats, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported greater likelihood of suicidal threats, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly less likelihood of suicidal threats. These main effects were qualified by a significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.16, t(347) = -2.81, p < .01$). Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for SBQ-Threats is significant among those low in mindfulness ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) but not high in mindfulness ($\beta = -.06, p = .53$). Predicted values, shown in Figure 5, show that the number of past suicide threats do not differ among those high in mindfulness regardless of cruel teasing history. On the other hand, being frequently cruelly teased poses a particularly high risk for suicide threats among those low in mindfulness.

Table 8

Moderated Regression Analysis for SBQ-Threats on TQ, MAAS, and TQ \times MAAS Interaction

	SBQ-Threats			
	B	SE	β	R ² (ΔR^2)
Step 1				
Gender	.03	.01	.02	
Marital Status	.19	.14	.07	
Ethnicity	-.12	.12	-.05	
Social Support (PSS)	-.05	.03	-.10	
TQ	.20	.07	.15**	
MAAS	-.12	.04	-.18**	.11
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	-.17	.06	-.16**	.13 (.02**)

Note. SBQ = Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

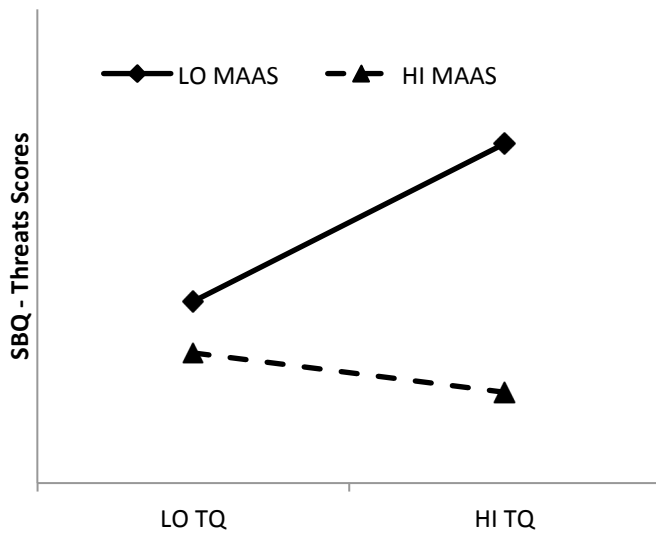


Figure 5. SBQ-Threats scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. SBQ = Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

SBQ-Future Likelihood as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 9, TQ ($\beta = .26, t(348) = 4.82, p < .01$) significantly predicted likelihood of future suicide attempts; however, MAAS ($\beta = -.03, t(348) = -.471, p = .64$) did not. Individuals who were cruelly teased frequently reported higher likelihood of suicidal behavior in the future than those who were not frequently cruelly teased. This main effect was qualified by a TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -1.8, t(347) = -2.81, p < .01$).

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for SBQ-Future is significant among those low in mindfulness ($\beta = .37, p < .01$) but not high in mindfulness ($\beta = .03, p = .80$). Predicted values, shown in Figure 6, show that the likelihood of suicidal behavior in the future does not differ among those high in mindfulness regardless of cruel teasing history. On the other hand, being frequently cruelly teased poses a particularly high risk for future suicidal behavior among those low in mindfulness.

Table 9

Moderated Regression Analysis for SBQ-Future on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	SBQ-Future			R ² (ΔR ²)
	B	SE	β	
Step 1				
Gender	-.02	.10	-.01	
Marital Status	.09	.16	.03	
Ethnicity	-.22	.13	-.08	
Social Support (PSS)	-.10	.03	-.17**	
TQ	.40	.08	.26**	
MAAS	-.02	.04	-.03	.14
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-.22	.07	-.18**	.17 (.03**)

Note. SBQ = Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

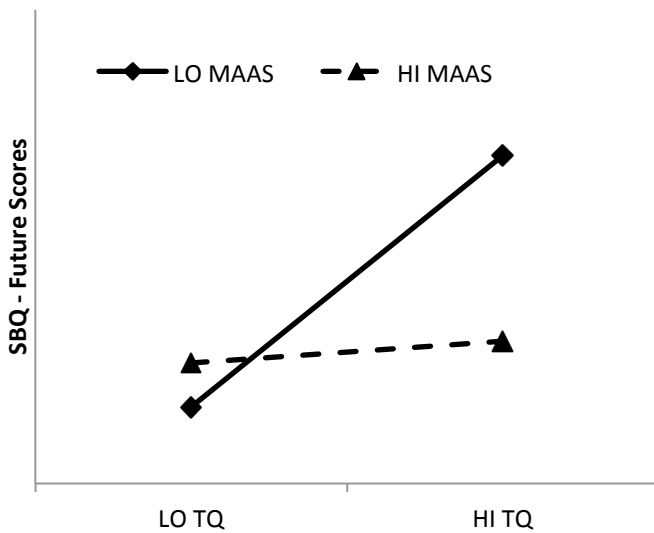


Figure 6. SBQ-Future scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. SBQ = Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

SBQ-Total as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 10, TQ ($\beta = .25, t(348) = 4.61, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.14, t(348) = -2.60, p < .05$) both significantly predicted total suicidal behavior, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported greater likelihood of suicidal behavior, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly less likelihood of overall suicidal behavior. These main effects were qualified by a significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.17, t(347) = -2.97, p < .01$).

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for SBQ-Total is significant among those low ($\beta = .35, p < .01$) but not high in mindfulness ($\beta = .04, p = .70$). Predicted values, shown in Figure 7, show that SBQ-Total does not differ among those high in mindfulness, regardless of teasing history. On the other hand, being frequently cruelly teased poses an especially high risk for total suicidal behavior threats among those low in mindfulness.

Table 10

Moderated Regression Analysis for SBQ-Total on TQ, MAAS, and TQ \times MAAS Interaction

	SBQ-Total			
	B	SE	β	R ² (Δ R ²)
Step 1				
Gender	.03	.09	.02	
Marital Status	.14	.14	.05	
Ethnicity	-.12	.12	-.05	
Social Support (PSS)	-.08	.03	-.15**	
TQ	.34	.07	.25**	
MAAS	-.10	.04	-.14**	.17
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	-.18	.06	-.17**	.19 (.02**)

Note. SBQ = Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

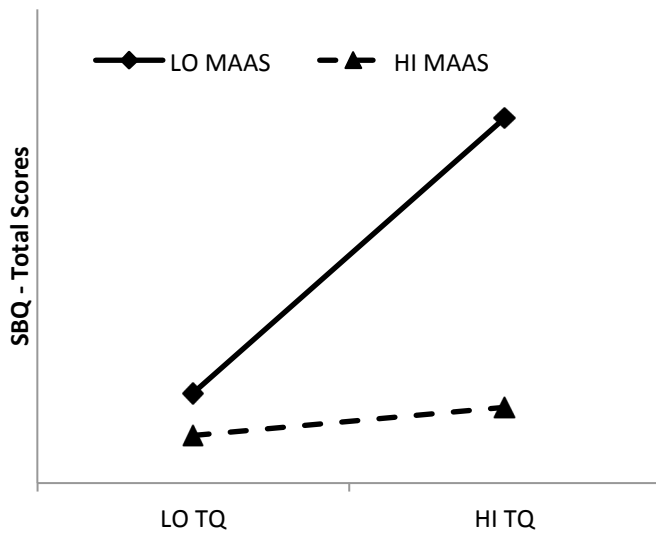


Figure 7. SBQ-Total scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. SBQ = Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

PWB as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 11, TQ ($\beta = -.15, t(348) = -3.50, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .10, t(348) = 2.29, p < .05$) both significantly predicted psychological well-being, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported lower levels of PWB, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly higher levels of PWB. The TQ \times MAAS interaction was not statistically significant ($p = .58$).

RSE as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 12, TQ ($\beta = -.23, t(348) = -4.60, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .18, t(348) = 3.67, p < .01$) both significantly predicted teasing-related RSE scores, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported lower levels of self-esteem, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly higher levels of self-esteem. These main effects were qualified by a significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.15, t(347) = -2.90, p < .01$).

Table 11

Moderated Regression Analysis for PWB on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	PWB			R ² (Δ R ²)
	B	SE	β	
Step 1				
Gender	.06	.07	.04	
Marital Status	.34	.11	.12**	
Ethnicity	.17	.09	.07	
Social Support (PSS)	.30	.02	.60**	
TQ	-.20	.06	-.15**	
MAAS	.07	.03	.10*	.46
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	.03	.05	.03	.46 (.00)

Note. PWB = Psychological Well-being Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 12

Moderated Regression Analysis for RSE on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	RSE			R ² (Δ R ²)
	B	SE	β	
Step 1				
Gender	-1.22	.78	-.07	
Marital Status	.50	1.20	.02	
Ethnicity	-.32	1.00	-.01	
Social Support (PSS)	1.80	.24	.36**	
TQ	-2.90	.63	-.23**	
MAAS	1.23	.33	.18**	.31
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-1.56	.54	-.15**	.30 (.02**)

Note. RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for RSE is significant both among those low ($\beta = -.22, p < .01$) and high ($\beta = -.52, p < .01$) in mindfulness. Predicted values, shown in Figure 8, reveal that nonfrequent targets of cruel teasing who are high in mindfulness report the highest RSE scores. Frequent targets who are low in mindfulness, on the other hand, report the lowest self-esteem. The scores of the other two pairings (i.e., nonfrequent targets low in mindfulness and frequent targets high in mindfulness) fell within these two extremes.

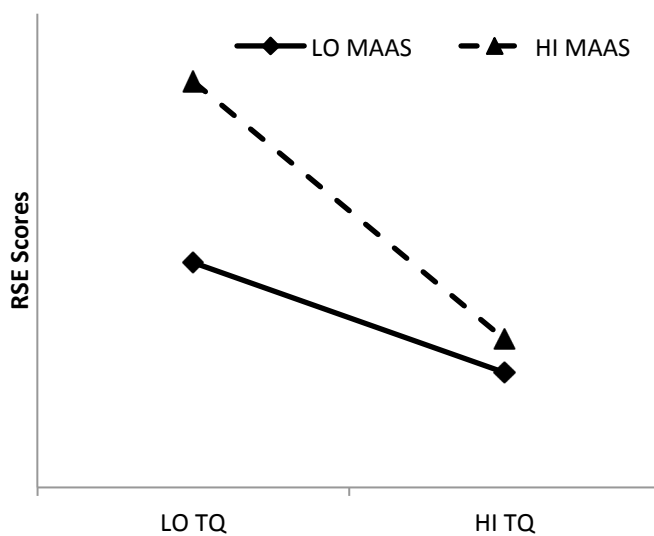


Figure 8. RSE scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire. MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

SWLS as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 13, TQ ($\beta = -.14, t(348) = -2.93, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .12, t(348) = 2.57, p < .05$) both significantly predicted SWLS, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported lower levels of SWLS, and those who were high in mindfulness reported significantly higher levels of SWLS. The TQ \times MAAS interaction was not statistically significant ($p = .63$).

Table 13

Moderated Regression Analysis for SWLS on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	SWLS			R ² (ΔR ²)
	B	SE	β	
Step 1				
Gender	-.01	.14	.00	
Marital Status	.05	.23	.01	
Ethnicity	.19	.20	.04	
Social Support (PSS)	.50	.05	.50**	
TQ	-.34	.12	.14**	
MAAS	.16	.62	.12*	.36
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-.05	.10	.02	.36 (.00)

Note. SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

VS as a Function of TQ and MAAS

As shown in Table 14, TQ ($\beta = -.20$, $t(348) = -4.11$, $p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .16$, $t(348) = 3.41$, $p < .01$) both significantly predicted VS scores, such that those who were cruelly teased frequently reported lower levels of vitality, and those high in mindfulness reported higher levels of vitality. These main effects were qualified by a marginally significant TQ × MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.09$, $t(347) = -1.70$, $p = .09$).

Subsequent analyses indicated that the effect of TQ for VS is significant among those low ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$) and high ($\beta = -.41$, $p < .01$) in mindfulness. Like self-esteem, predicted values, shown in Figure 9, reveal that nonfrequent targets of cruel teasing who are high in mindfulness report the highest VS scores. Frequent targets low in mindfulness, on the other hand, report the

lowest VS scores. The scores of the other two pairings (i.e., nonfrequent targets low in mindfulness and frequent targets high in mindfulness) fell within these two extremes.

Table 14

Moderated Regression Analysis for VS on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS Interaction

	VS			
	B	SE	β	R ² (ΔR^2)
Step 1				
Gender	-.10	.13	-.04	
Marital Status	-.09	.21	-.02	
Ethnicity	.05	.18	.01	
Social Support (PSS)	.38	.04	.43**	
TQ	-.44	.11	-.20**	
MAAS	.20	.06	-.20**	.60
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-.16	.10	-.10 [†]	.60 (.01)

Note. VS = Vitality Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

[†] = $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

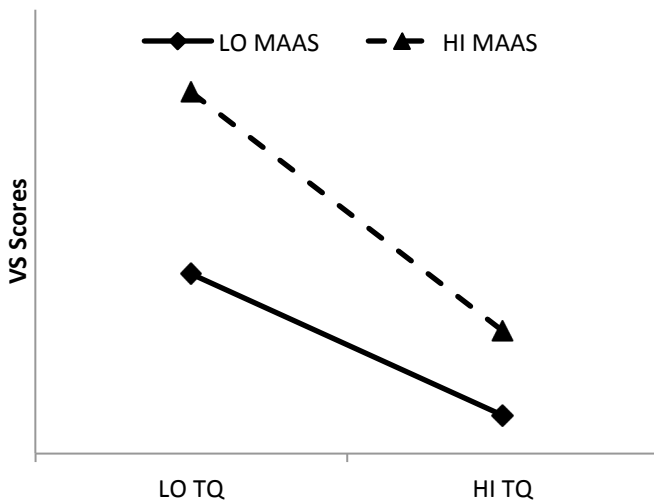


Figure 9. VS scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS interaction. VS = Vitality Scale; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire. MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

Exploratory Bivariate Correlation and Three-Way Moderation Analyses with Sexual Identity Status (SIS)

As found in Table 1, SIS correlated significantly with negative psychological health outcomes measured by the CAPS ($r = .26, p < .01$), BAI ($r = .18, p < .01$), CESD ($r = .22, p < .01$), SBQ-Attempts ($r = .28, p < .01$), SBQ-Ideation ($r = .23, p < .01$), SBQ-Threats ($r = .21, p < .01$), SBQ-Future ($r = .30, p < .01$), and SBQ Total ($r = .31, p < .01$). SIS also correlated inversely to RSE ($r = -.11, p < .05$), whereas the relations between SIS and PWB, SWLS, and VS were not statistically significant. Thus, individuals who identify as a sexual minority report greater levels of psychological pathology and lower self-esteem than their sexual majority counterparts. As indicated in Table 2, SIS also correlated significantly with TQ ($r = .28, p < .01$) and MAAS ($r = -.13, p < .05$). Thus, sexual minority subjects reported lower levels of mindfulness and higher incidences of cruel teasing than sexual majority participants.

As noted above, I explored if the role of teasing history and mindfulness for psychological health differed as a function of participants' sexual identity status. To complete analyses, I computed relevant two-way (TQ x MAAS, TQ x SIS, MAAS x SIS) and three-way (TQ x MAAS x SIS) interaction terms with SIS dummy coded such that 0 = sexual majority and 1 = sexual minority. I entered covariate terms and main effects in Step 1 of the regression analyses, two-way interaction terms in Step 2, and the three-way interaction term in Step 3. Results of subsequent three-way moderated regression analyses follow.

In light of the focus on exploring the potential significance of the TQ x MAAS x SIS, I plotted predicted values and computed simple slope analyses only when the three-way interaction terms were statistically significant.

CAPS as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

As shown in Table 15, TQ ($\beta = .49, t(347) = 10.83, p < .01$), MAAS ($\beta = -.15, t(347) = -3.30, p < .01$) and SIS ($\beta = .10, t(347) = 2.30, p < .05$) all significantly predicted teasing-related traumatic stress. In this case CAPS increased with increases in TQ and among those who identified as sexual minorities, and CAPS decreased as MAAS increased. The TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, and MAAS \times SIS interactions were not significant ($ps > .15$). However, the TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interaction was statistically significant ($\beta = .17, t(343) = -2.0, p < .05$).

Table 15

Moderated Regression Analysis for CAPS on TQ, MAAS, and TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS, and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS Interactions

	CAPS			
	B	SE	β	R ² (Δ R ²)
Step 1				
Gender	.37	.25	.06	
Marital Status	.19	.40	.02	
Ethnicity	.65	.33	.08	
Social Support (PSS)	-.25	.08	-.14**	
TQ	2.4	.21	.49**	
MAAS	-.36	.11	-.15**	
SIS	.91	.40	.10**	.43**
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	-.26	.20	-.07	
TQ \times SIS	-.20	.60	.02	
MAAS \times SIS	-.60	.40	-.08	.44** (.01*)
Step 3				
TQ \times MAAS \times SIS	-.90	.44	-.17*	.45** (.01*)

Note. CAPS = Clinician Administered PTSD Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

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

Predicted values, shown in Figure 10, reveal that CAPS scores increase as TQ increases for sexual majority ($\beta = .47, p < .01$) and sexual minority ($\beta = .51, p < .01$) participants who are low in mindfulness; likewise, CAPS scores increase as TQ increases for sexual majority ($\beta = .60, p < .01$) and sexual minority ($\beta = .37, p < .01$) participants who are high in mindfulness. Among those who were not frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual majority participants high in MAAS report the lowest CAPS scores, whereas sexual minority participants low in MAAS report the highest. Likewise, among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual minority participants low in MAAS report the highest CAPS scores. However, among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual minority participants high in MAAS report the lowest CAPS scores, even relative to sexual majority participants.

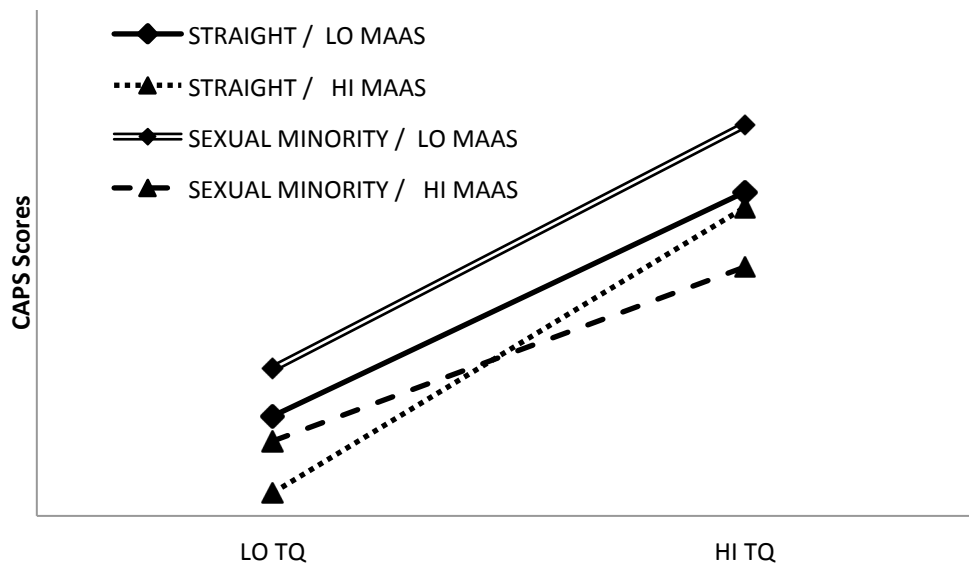


Figure 10. CAPS scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS x SIS interaction. CAPS = Clinician Administered PTSD Scale; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

BAI as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = .32, t(347) = 6.26, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.19, t(347) = -3.81, p < .01$) both significantly predicted teasing-related anxiety; however, SIS did not ($p = .39$). These main

effects were qualified by a marginally significant TQ \times MAAS interaction ($\beta = -.11, t(344) = -1.81, p = .07$). The TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .16$).

CESD as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = .36, t(347) = 7.72, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = -.20, t(347) = -4.36, p < .01$) both significantly predicted CESD scores; however, SIS did not ($p = .11$). The TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .17$).

SBQ-Attempts as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = .17, t(347) = 3.03, p < .01$), MAAS ($\beta = -.15, t(347) = -2.83, p < .01$) and SIS ($\beta = .20, t(347) = 3.90, p < .01$) significantly predicted SBQ-Attempts. The TQ \times MAAS and TQ \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($p > .54$). The MAAS \times SIS interaction was marginally significant ($\beta = -.11, t(344) = -1.78, p = .08$). The TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interaction was not statistically significant ($p = .76$).

SBQ-Ideation as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = .14, t(347) = 2.48, p < .05$) and SIS ($\beta = .17, t(347) = 3.22, p < .01$) significantly predicted SBQ-Ideation, while the effect of MAAS ($\beta = -.10, t(347) = -1.70, p = .09$) was marginally significant. The TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, and MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .21$). The TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interaction also was not statistically significant ($p = 1.0$).

SBQ-Threats as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = -.12, t(347) = 2.10, p < .05$), MAAS ($\beta = -.17, t(347) = -3.11, p < .01$) and SIS ($\beta = .14, t(347) = 2.65, p < .01$) significantly predicted SBQ-Threats. The TQ \times MAAS and

MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .13$). The TQ \times SIS interaction was marginally significant ($\beta = .14, t(344) = 1.80, p = .07$). The TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interaction also was not statistically significant ($p = .32$).

SBQ-Future Likelihood as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = .20, t(347) = 3.73, p < .01$) and SIS ($\beta = .22, t(347) = 4.30, p < .01$) significantly predicted SBQ-Future, while the effect of MAAS was not statistically significant ($p = .76$). The TQ \times MAAS ($\beta = -.12, t(344) = -1.90, p = .06$) was marginally significant; however, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .27$).

SBQ-Total as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = .19, t(347) = 3.51, p < .01$), MAAS ($\beta = -.13, t(347) = 2.42, p < .05$) and SIS ($\beta = .22, t(347) = 4.37, p < .01$) significantly predicted SBQ-Total. The TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .12$).

PWB as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = -.15, t(347) = -3.44, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .10, t(347) = 2.29, p < .05$) significantly predicted PWB; however, SIS did not ($p = .80$). The TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interactions were not statistically significant ($ps > .24$).

RSE as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

As shown in Table 16, TQ ($\beta = -.22, t(347) = -4.41, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .18, t(347) = 3.65, p < .01$) significantly predicted RSE; SIS was not statistically significant ($p = .87$). These main effects were qualified by marginally significant TQ \times MAAS ($\beta = -.10, t(344) = -1.75, p = .08$) and TQ \times SIS ($\beta = -.12, t(344) = 1.69, p = .09$) interactions. The MAAS \times SIS was not statistically significant, however ($p = .87$). These two-way interactions were qualified by a statistically significant TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interaction ($\beta = .20, t(343) = -2.70, p < .01$).

Table 16

Moderated Regression Analysis for RSE on TQ, MAAS, and TQ × MAAS, TQ × SIS, MAAS × SIS, and TQ × MAAS × SIS Interactions

	B	RSE SE	β	R ² (ΔR^2)
Step 1				
Gender	-1.23	.78	-.07	
Marital Status	.52	1.2	-.02	
Ethnicity	-.33	1.0	-.02	
Social Support (PSS)	1.80	.24	.40**	
TQ	-2.90	.70	-.22**	
MAAS	1.22	.34	.20**	
SIS	-.21	1.22	-.01	.31
Step 2				
TQ × MAAS	-1.07	.61	-.10 [†]	
TQ × SIS	3.00	1.80	.12 [†]	
MAAS × SIS	-.21	1.24	.01	.33 (.02**)
Step 3				
TQ × MAAS × SIS	-4.00	1.34	-.25**	.34 (.01**)

Note. RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. [†] = $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Predicted values, shown in Figure 11, reveal RSE scores decrease as TQ increases for sexual majority ($\beta = -.37, p < .01$) and sexual minority ($\beta = -.23, p < .01$) participants who are low in mindfulness; likewise, RSE scores decrease as TQ increases for sexual majority ($\beta = -.36, p < .01$) and sexual minority ($\beta = -.51, p < .01$) participants who are high in mindfulness. Among those who were not frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual minority participants low in MAAS report the lowest RSE scores, whereas sexual minority participants high in MAAS report the highest. Among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, both sexual majority and sexual minority participants low in MAAS, report congruent low RSE scores. Among those who

were frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual majority participants high in MAAS report the highest RSE scores.

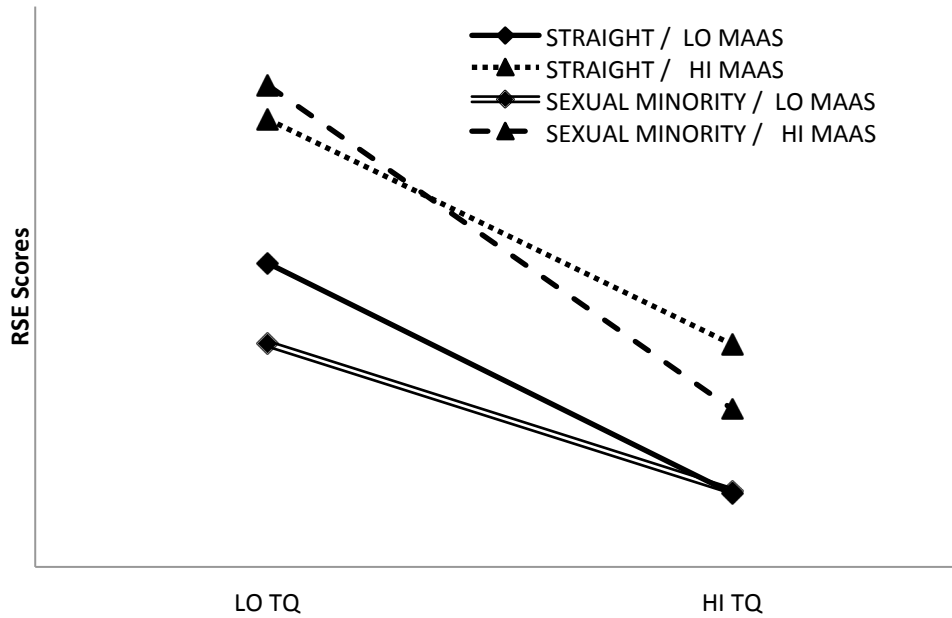


Figure 11. RSE scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS x SIS interaction. RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

SWLS as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

TQ ($\beta = -.13, t(347) = -2.77, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .12, t(347) = 2.56, p < .05$)

significantly predicted SWLS; the effect of SIS was not statistically significant ($p = .80$). TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interactions also were not statistically significant ($ps > .54$)

VS as a Function of TQ, MAAS and SIS

As shown in Table 17, TQ ($\beta = -.20, t(347) = -4.13, p < .01$) and MAAS ($\beta = .16, t(347) = 3.43, p < .01$) significantly predicted VS. Again, the effect of SIS was not statistically significant ($p = .54$). TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, and MAAS \times SIS interactions also were not

statistically significant ($ps > .11$). However, the TQ \times MAAS \times SIS interaction was statistically significant ($\beta = .20, t(343) = 2.13, p < .05$).

Table 17

Moderated Regression Analysis for VS on TQ, MAAS, SIS and TQ \times MAAS, TQ \times SIS, MAAS \times SIS, and TQ \times MAAS \times SIS Interactions

	VS			
	B	SE	β	R ² (ΔR^2)
Step 1				
Gender	-.10	.13	-.03	
Marital Status	-.10	.21	-.02	
Ethnicity	.10	.18	.02	
Social Support (PSS)	.40	.04	.43**	
TQ	-.50	.11	.20**	
MAAS	.20	.06	.16**	
SIS	.13	.21	.03	.35
Step 2				
TQ \times MAAS	-.17	.11	-.10	
TQ \times SIS	-.14	.30	-.03	
MAAS \times SIS	-.03	.22	-.01	.35 (.01)
Step 3				
TQ \times MAAS \times SIS	.50	.23	.20*	.36 (.01*)

Note. VS = Vitality Scale; Gender: 0 = male 1 = female; Marital Status: 0 = not married 1 = married; Ethnicity: 0 = white/Caucasian American 1 = ethnic minority; PSS = Perceived Social Support; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire-Revised; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Predicted values, shown in Figure 12, reveal that VS scores for those high in mindfulness significantly decrease as TQ increases for both sexual majority ($\beta = -.65, p < .01$) and sexual minority ($\beta = -.35, p < .01$) participants. VS scores significantly decrease as TQ increases for sexual minority ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$), but not sexual majority ($p = .20$) participants low in mindfulness. Among nonfrequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual majority participants low in

MAAS report the lowest VS scores, whereas sexual majority participants high in MAAS report the highest. Among frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual minority participants high in MAAS report the highest VS scores, whereas straight” participants high in MAAS report the lowest VS scores.

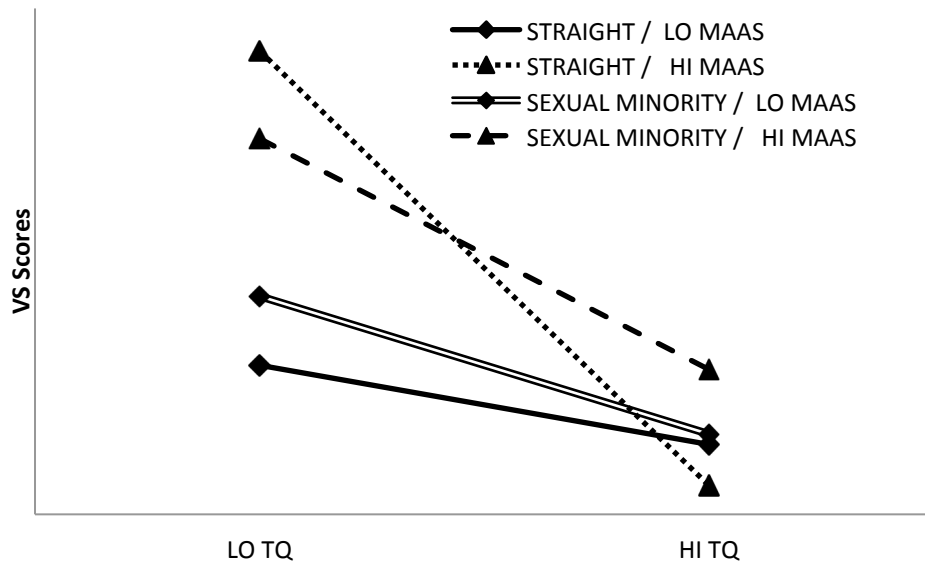


Figure 12. VS scores as a function of the TQ x MAAS x SIS interaction. VS = Vitality Scale; TQ = Teasing Questionnaire. MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Past research has revealed consistent relations between being teased cruelly and psychological maladies (e.g. Kowalski, 2001). However, not all individuals respond to cruel teasing in the same manner, nor are they subsequently afflicted to the same degree by psychological maladies. Little research has examined factors that may account for these individual differences in the long-term psychological outcomes associated with frequent cruel teasing. In this thesis I proffered that mindfulness might be one such variable and examined the role of mindfulness in moderating negative outcomes among individuals with a history of frequent cruel teasing.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Storch et al., 2005), cruel teasing history related significantly with all markers of both psychological health and psychological pathology, indicating that a history of cruel teasing is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being, lower self-esteem, less satisfaction with life, and lower vitality. Furthermore, the more frequently individuals experienced cruel teasing in the past, the more negative psychological health outcomes they experienced, including posttraumatic stress related to the teasing, general anxiety, depression, and increased risk for suicide. Also consistent with previous research (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003), mindfulness related significantly and inversely with symptoms of posttraumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors. Mindfulness likewise related positively with markers of psychological health outcomes, which indicates that the higher individuals' mindfulness the more likely they are to experience overall psychological well-being, have higher self-esteem, be satisfied with their lives, and feel a sense of personal vitality.

Teasing history and mindfulness also related to one another, such that individuals with particularly frequent cruel teasing experiences report lower levels of mindfulness. What is not clear is whether those low in mindfulness are more likely to be cruelly teased than those high in mindfulness, or if being frequently cruelly teased contributes to lower levels of mindfulness, perhaps as a coping mechanism. Teasing history also related to marital status and perceived social support but not ethnicity or gender. Compared to teasing history, mindfulness only significantly related with perceived social support but no other covariate. Again, the causal order of these variables is not clear. Even when controlling for relevant covariates, subsequent regression analyses also uniquely linked a history of frequent cruel teasing to pathological outcomes, i.e. greater traumatic stress, higher levels of anxiety and depression, suicidal attempts, ideation, threats, future intention, and total suicidality scores. Teasing history also predicted all psychological health outcomes, i.e., lower psychological well-being, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and vitality. These findings are important in that they add further depth to previous work on teasing. Previous research has documented relations between teasing and a number of these variables such as depression and low self-esteem (Hazler, 1994; Hazler et al., 1993; Kowalski, 2000). However, to my knowledge no previous research has explored directly the relations between teasing history and psychological well-being, life satisfaction, vitality, or for that matter, mindfulness. Thus, these data demonstrate that not only does a history of cruel teasing increase the likelihood of developing various types of psychological pathology, but they also link cruel teasing to lower levels of eudaimonic and hedonic psychological health (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Likewise, subsequent regression analyses revealed that higher dispositional mindfulness uniquely predicted less traumatic stress related to prior cruel teasing experiences, lower levels of

psychological pathology (anxiety, depression, suicidality), and higher levels of psychological health (psychological well-being, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and vitality). Most important to this investigation, however, is the finding that among frequent targets of cruel teasing, those with higher levels of dispositional mindfulness did not evidence detrimental psychological effects to the same extent as targets with low levels of mindfulness. With respect to forms of psychological pathology, for instance, among people who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, those high in mindfulness were markedly less traumatized by cruel teasing events than those low in mindfulness. Whereas mindfulness did not moderate the relation between teasing history and depression, the importance of mindfulness became readily apparent in analyses of general anxiety. Indeed, being frequently cruelly teased for those low in mindfulness is particularly anxiety inducing. Likewise, among those low in mindfulness, being frequently cruelly teased poses a particularly high risk for suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, suicide threats, future intent, and total suicidality. Congruent findings emerged with respect to markers of psychological health. While levels of psychological well-being and satisfaction with life do not differ among those high and low in mindfulness regardless of cruel teasing history, being frequently cruelly teased significantly affects people's self-esteem and sense of vitality. More specifically, among frequent targets of cruel teasing, those high in mindfulness report markedly higher self-esteem and vitality than those low in mindfulness. Even with a history of frequent cruel teasing, individuals high in mindfulness had significantly higher self-esteem than those low in mindfulness. Likewise, among those with a history of cruel teasing, individuals high in mindfulness had significantly higher vitality than those low in mindfulness.

Collectively, these findings highlight the potential importance of mindfulness for dealing with negative and aversive life events, like cruel teasing, and for therapies with individuals

whose scars from such events have undermined their psychological health. Mindfulness is a trait that can grow with training and practice. In both cases mindfulness could help people confront and process emotions to deal with the traumatic and anxiety inducing components of teasing experiences (Brown et al., 2007; Lakey, et al., 2008). Mindfulness also would help to facilitate healthy self-regulation presumably by helping targets maintain feelings of personal control instead of helpless pawns of external forces and pressures (Moller et al., 2006). Mindfulness would likewise mitigate the likelihood that targets respond in a defensive or retaliatory manner when faced with the self-threat inherent to cruel teasing (Levesque & Brown, 2007). In this way mindfulness would help targets maintain self-esteem and vitality and diminish maladaptive responses beyond violent retaliation, such as suicide.

To escape the sense of pressure, tension, and instability often created by cruel teasing targets often experience shame, internalize fault, try to block the experience from conscious awareness (Kowalski, 2004). Mindfulness could alleviate the perception of ego-threat and the defensive processes that cruel teasing often engenders (Brown et al., 2007). Individuals low in mindfulness could learn to accept the reality of the experience, deal with painful repercussions, and let go of lingering shame or negative affect still wedded to cruel teasing events. Evidence from numerous studies has shown that mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions may promote psychological and physiological well-being (e.g., Davidson et al., 2003). Mindfulness may likewise lessen the detrimental effects of teasing on victims' health. In short, the current evidence highlights that mindfulness seems particularly important for those who are targets of cruel teasing presumably by augmenting their psychological, physical, motivational, and interpersonal functioning (Brown et al., 2007).

Teasing History, Mindfulness, and Sexual Identity Status

Given that sexual identity is a potentially stigmatizing self-aspect with particular relevance for cruel teasing among sexual minorities (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009), I also explored the possibility that relations among mindfulness, cruel teasing, and psychological health differed systematically as a function of sexual minority status. I believed that mindfulness would be particularly relevant to the psychological health of sexual minority participants who have been the targets of frequent cruel teasing. However, exploratory three-way moderated regression analyses were much less consistent than those above. For instance, the teasing history and mindfulness relations between sexual minority and sexual majority participants did not differ significantly for general anxiety, depression, suicidal behavior, psychological well-being, or satisfaction with life. However, teasing history and mindfulness interacted significantly with sexual identity status in analyses of posttraumatic stress, self-esteem, and vitality, although the interpretation of these findings is not particularly clear.

Post-traumatic stress symptoms increase and self-esteem decreases with frequency of teasing history for sexual majority individuals and sexual minorities regardless of whether they are low or high in mindfulness. Sexual minority participants who were frequent targets of cruel teasing and low in mindfulness report the highest posttraumatic stress. However, among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, both sexual majority and sexual minority participants who were low in mindfulness report congruent low self-esteem. Interestingly, among frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual minority participants high in mindfulness report the lowest posttraumatic stress scores, even relative to sexual majority participants. Among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual majority participants high in mindfulness reported the highest self-esteem.

Vitality also significantly decreases as teasing history frequency increases for both sexual majority and sexual minority participants who are high in mindfulness and for sexual minority participants low in mindfulness. Vitality did not decrease for sexual majority participants low in mindfulness, however, as they were particularly low in vitality whether or not they experienced low or high levels of frequent cruel teasing. Likewise, posttraumatic stress results showed that among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, sexual minority participants high in mindfulness report the highest vitality. In this case, however, sexual majority participants high in mindfulness report the lowest vitality, consistent with those low in mindfulness.

The fact that I found statistical significance in only 3 of 12 three-way moderation analyses and the fact that the findings across those that were significant were not particularly consistent, renders finding a cogent explanation quite difficult. Perhaps the most parsimonious explanation is that cruel teasing experiences affect people's psychological health systematically when they are low in mindfulness, and, therefore, the importance for mindfulness is simply equally important across people without regard for their sexual identity.

Still, based on the three statistically significant results, a number of questions remain. For example, why did sexual identity moderate the teasing history and mindfulness relations for these variables but not the other markers of psychological health? Among participants with a history of frequent cruel teasing, why do sexual minorities high in mindfulness report less traumatic-stress than sexual majority participants high in mindfulness? Among those who were frequent targets of cruel teasing, why do sexual minority participants high in mindfulness report the highest vitality, whereas sexual majority participants high in mindfulness report the lowest vitality? Moreover, among those who were not frequent targets of cruel teasing, why do sexual

minority participants low in mindfulness report higher vitality than sexual majority participants low in mindfulness?

In light of the small number of participants who identified as sexual minorities, these findings must be interpreted with caution. Future research with adequate numbers of sexual minority participants should delve more deeply into the relations among these variables to examine how mindfulness may work to attenuate psychological pathology and promote psychological well-being for those who identify as a sexual minority, in addition to those who may carry other potentially stigmatizing aspects of identity.

Other Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the apparent importance of mindfulness for mitigating the psychological ills often associated with a history of cruel teasing, a number of limitations must be noted. For instance, the use of self-report questionnaires and retrospective accounts of cruel teasing limits the conclusions that can be firmly drawn from this research. Future research could use elementary, middle, or high school student participants, assess teasing frequency scores from outside sources such as parents and teachers, and longitudinally track changes in participants' psychological health that occur with increases or decreases in cruel teasing frequency. As noted above, future research should also strive for greater heterogeneity among the samples not only with respect to sexual identity status but also with other demographic variables such as ethnicity and gender. The fact that the current sample was comprised predominately of White / Caucasian American, female, unmarried college students may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other populations. Finally, given that mindfulness is a trait that can be increased with training, future longitudinal research should examine if mindfulness training helps to increase the psychological health among those who are (or have been) frequently cruelly teased

and who are low in trait mindfulness. Various forms of psychotherapy integrate mindfulness training and practice as a core component, and I expect that clinicians doing so in a therapeutic setting will find that mindfulness training is effective in ameliorating the long-term negative effects of being targeted for cruel teasing (cf. Kabat-Zinn, 2003). On the other hand, the current data speak most directly to the necessity of preventing the “permanent scars” (Kowalski et al., 2001, p. 192) caused by cruel teasing. From this perspective, developmental influences that promote mindfulness, such as mindfulness training integrated as a part of education curriculum, should curtail the psychological problems associated with cruel teasing before they even develop (Brown et al., 2007; Fonagy et al., 1991).

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