RITUAL INSULTS AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS: CAUSING HARM OR
PASSING TIME?

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

A significant gap in the bullying literature includes the lack of scholarship surrounding ethnically diverse populations (Espelage & Horne, 2008). This multistudy investigation examined the Black oral tradition of roasting and its relation with bullying behavior. Study 1 included data collected through survey and focus group responses of middle school students. Thematic analysis revealed that students roast others for fun, for revenge, to protect and to defend themselves. Though roasting has benefits, it can also lower students' self-esteem, hurt student's feelings, and disrupt classroom learning. To avoid further victimization, some students conceal the negative psychosocial effects of roasting from their peers.

Study 2 involved the development of an instrument to measure roasting attitudes, behaviors, and motivation, and also the relationship between roasting, depression, and student school sense of belonging. Items were written based on the student survey and semi-structured focus group responses of Study 1, and a review of the roasting literature. The purpose of these items was to examine the contemporary dynamics of roasting and assess its possible relation to bullying. Exploratory factor analysis yielded three factors: (a) *Pro-Roasting* (α = .88; students in this category hold a positive attitude towards roasting); (b) *Uneasy* (α = .81; students in this category are inclined to feel socially anxious around others who roast); and (c) *Lowered Self-confidence* (α = .86; roasting victimization produces a negative psychological affect for these students). The convergent and divergent validity of this instrument support the notion that there is a relationship between roasting and bullying. Therefore, this research adds to the multiculturally-sensitive literature on bullying and can influence the development of

intervention programs.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, one third of students ages 12-18 years are bullied at school each year (Robers, Zhang, & Truman, 2010). Bullying has been linked to depression, lowered self-esteem, and/or a sense of powerlessness for victims (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Although more rare, some victims resort to attempting and completing suicide (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010; Inbar, 2009; Maag, 2007; Simon, 2009). Needless to say, bullying is a serious problem in American schools. However, it is speculated here that bully prevention and intervention programs largely fail (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008) due in part to their insensitivity to the diverse US student population and the lack of attention to the multicultural aspects of bullying.

Currently, a significant gap in the bullying literature includes that lack of scholarship surrounding ethnically diverse populations (Espelage & Horne, 2008). In Peskin, Tortolero, and Markham's (2006) sample of Black and Hispanic middle and high school students, Blacks had higher rates of group teasing, harassing others, teasing others, and upsetting other students for enjoyment compared to Hispanics. Blacks also had higher rates of being teased and called names. All of these variables are characteristics of Black ritual insults.

In the Black community, roasting behavior (i.e., Black ritual insults) is widely popular (Abrahams, 1990; Cole, 1974; Dollard, 1939; Kochman, 1969; Percelay, Dweck, & Ivey, 1995; Smitherman, 2000). It can be defined as talking about someone in a group of three or more people through clever insults (Smitherman, 1977). However, scholars in the developmental literature largely overlook this activity and it is not clear what is

currently the function and outcome of roasting among early adolescents. This occurrence may be partly due to how roasting is largely viewed in the Black community and by scholars who are aware of the activity. For instance, in attempts to explain why the African American youth in their sample received more peer nominations for aggressiveness, Graham and Juvonen (2002) mentioned Black ritual insults, its prosocial functions, and how it may be misunderstood by other racial groups as verbal harassment; however, they did not consider the potentially adverse affects of roasting. It should not be assumed that roasting always improves African American friendships. Within-group variability should be accounted for. Although there are benefits to roasting, the line between roasting and bullying is almost non-existent.

What is Roasting?

Played for fun or just to be mean, roasting is an aggressive Black oral tradition dating back to American slavery (Delain, Pearson, & Anderson, 1985; Smitherman, 1977) and even to Africa (Chimenzie, 1976; Smitherman, 2000). This oral test of linguistic creativity and verbal expressiveness can be defined as talking about someone in a group of three or more people through clever insults (Smitherman, 1977). An example of a joke might be "Your fresh slave look'n ass. Fresh skunk, juice breath ass boy. Why yo eyes look'n at each other? You look serious when you happy, field ant look'n ass" (R. Priester, personal communication, May 19, 2011). Across the country (Perceley et al., 1995; Smitherman, 2000), the game or activity is known by different names--*roastin'* is what it is called in the southeastern area and the popular urban media website "WorldStar Hip Hop." *Heatin'* is what it is called in the Chicago area. *Signifying and playing the dozens* are older terms, the latter referring to ritually insulting one's mother or relatives

(Garner, 1983; Smitherman, 1977). The name of this oral tradition usually changes with each generation, but the fundamentals of the game remain the same (Labov, 1972; Smitherman, 2000). This thesis will refer to the activity as *roasting*, unless *the dozens* is being referenced, in which case that distinction will be made.

Hubert "Rap" Brown (1974), former leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), described a roasting session (defined here as two or more people or groups roasting each other in competition) and the intent of a ritual insult contest in his autobiography *Die Nigger Die!*:

> . . . what you try to do is totally destroy somebody else with your words. It's that whole competition thing again, fighting each other. There'd be sometimes 40 or 50 dudes standing around and the winner was determined by the way they responded to what was said. If you fell all over each other laughing, then you knew you'd scored. . . . The real aim of the dozens was to get a dude so mad that he'd cry or get mad enough to fight . . . Signifying is more humane. Instead of coming down on somebody's mother, you come down on them. (p. 206)

As alluded to by Brown, roasting is viewed largely as a competition in the Black community. Participants aim to recite the funniest joke and get the most reaction from their nearby audience of peers. The person who makes the crowd or group laugh the hardest wins that session.

Although the intent of roasting is to arouse a negative emotional response from one's competitor, scholars note that the jokes are not meant to be taken seriously (Garner, 1983; Lefever, 1981; Smitherman, 2000). Roasting is supposed to be taken in good sport (Garner, 1983; Smitherman, 1977). In other words, "it's not personal, it's [just] business"

(Smitherman, 2000, p. 223). Smitherman (1977) stated that to maintain control in a roasting session and prevent fights, the insults must be impersonal. For example, it is disrespectful to talk about an ailing or deceased relative.

However, often times, a broad but reasonably well-defined mixture of qualities are likely to be brought up about one's relative(s) during a dozen's session. For instance, a person's mother could be talked about because of her "age, weight (fat or skinny), ugliness, blackness, smell, the food she eats, the clothes she wears, her poverty, and sexual activity" (Labov, 1972, p. 288). An example of a joke about a mother's appearance might be: "Your mother is so ugly, I took her to the zoo and the zookeeper said, 'Thanks for bringing her back'" (Percelay et al., 1995, p. 72). Other relatives were talked about to keep the session interesting or for their specific attributes: "Your father is so poor, he got a part-time job painting Skittles" (Percelay et al., p. 109). Labov (1972) labeled these specific attributes as "ritualized attribute[s]" (p. 278), however it was not explicitly defined. Therefore, based on Labov's examples, a ritualized attribute is defined here as an aspect of a person deemed a defect that is habitually talked about by others. This notion blurs the line between insults being impersonal, or not an "accurate statement of reality" (Smitherman, 1977, p. 133), and personalized attacks.

Labov (1972) asserted that the difference between personal insults and ritual insults can be detected in the responses they are met with: "A personal insult is answered by a denial, excuse, or mitigation, whereas a sound or ritual insult is answered by another sound" (p. 298). However, Kochman (1983) argued that roasting "insults may still be personal (true) even though they are not denied" (p. 331). In a roasting session, play becomes serious when an insult is met with a denial. The responsibility to maintain the

play frame rests solely with the recipient. If a recipient responds to being roasted by roasting back, the play continues. But if that person responds with a defensive denial, an argument can ensue. Because roasting is supposed to be answered with more roasting (whether the initial joke be personal or impersonal), the person in competition loses if he or she responds with a denial. It is important to note that as the jokes get more and more personal, it gets tougher for recipients to not take what is being said about them seriously.

Typically, it is Black males who roast (Garner, 1983; Lefever, 1981; Smitherman, 1977). But there is evidence that Black females (Levefer, 1981) and White males (Ayoub & Barnett, 1965; Bronner, 1978; Labov, 1972) also roast. The White material is different from the insults used by Blacks. The White material is limited in content as well as in style and quantity. "Shit" is the most popular subject, and the insults, for the most part, center around forbidden words rather than forbidden events. Additionally, roasting is less time-consuming in White groups compared to Black groups (Labov, 1972).

Roasting Motivations

Since American slavery, self-control or the ability to endure hardship when necessary has been an admired virtue in Black culture (Levine, 1977 as cited in Lefever, 1981). Therefore, the main intent of the first ritual insults in America was for Black slave parents to instill this kind of discipline in their children for survival purposes in a hostile and racist society.

As time went on and Blacks moved away from slavery but remained in the mire of oppression and overt racism, roasting became a way of "laughing to keep from crying" (Smitherman, 2000, p. 225). The activity served as a way to release the concealed rage and frustrations of being a Black man or woman facing difficulties in White America.

Further, the game was a test of how to survive through a sharp command of language and verbal humor as opposed to physical force. Presently, roasting continues to serve as liberation from the stresses of daily life (Smitherman, 2000), although at the expense of others (Folb, 1980).

Further, Berdie (1947) found that "in the absence of anything better to do, it serves as entertainment" (p. 121). Other scholars (Garner, 1983; Lefever, 1981; Smitherman, 1977, 2000) also found entertainment to be the reason why some participate in ritual insult activities. According to Johnson (1941), lower class African American males in the early twentieth century were barred from accepted societal outlets to express themselves (as cited in Golightly & Scheffler, 1948). They lived in a restricted cultural world with a small number of role models to emulate and a small number of inspiring activities to engage in. So, they regularly used sex and virility (common subjects in dozens sessions) among their peer groups to gain status.

Constructive Uses of Roasting

Verbal skills. Roasting is a way some Black children build verbal skills because it requires a manipulation of language (Lefever, 1981; Morgan, 1994). Brown (1974) spoke about the game's ability to educate participants:

> The streets are where young bloods get their education. I learned how to talk in the street, not from reading about Dick and Jane going to the zoo and all that simple shit. The teacher would test our vocabulary each week, but we knew the vocabulary we needed. They'd give us arithmetic to exercise our minds. Hell, we exercised our minds by playing the dozens. (p. 205)

It takes a certain level of language skill to be good at roasting; and sometimes it requires

identical skill from targets and bystanders to understand the jokes in all their metaphors and innuendos (Mitchell-Kernan, 1971). For that reason, only a few become really good at the game (Kochman, 1969). Garner (1983) found that those who roast obtain communicative ability useful in both Black and White society.

Literacy. Roasting behavior, given its long history and also wide acceptance in the African American community, can act as a bridge to specific literacy skills in a school environment. Heath (1989) listed the possible literacy skills roasting offers: "keen listening and observational skills, quick recognition of nuanced roles, rapid-fire dialogue, hard-driving argumentation, succinct recapitulation of an event, striking metaphors, and comparative analyses based on unexpected analogies" (p. 370). All children can benefit from these skills.

One reason roasting is beneficial for children's literacy development is because of its large use of figurative language. Much of the complexity in producing and comprehending roasting jokes stem from their heavy reliance on metaphors and metaphor-like comparisons (Delain, Pearson, & Anderson, 1985). Delain et al. found that this steady exposure to metaphorical language indeed helps children's academic figurative language comprehension. For their White sample, figurative language comprehension was explained by general verbal ability. But for their Black sample, a mixture of general verbal ability, roasting ability, and competency with Black English explained figurative language comprehension. They found that Black English competency influenced roasting skill, which in turn affected figurative language comprehension. The authors concluded that a plausible explanation for the interpretive skill of academic figurative language is that Black language patterns, especially roasting,

rely greatly on exaggerated language and creative word associations (e.g., a child saying to someone with an oddly shaped head, "You got a Quaker Oatmeal box head" [J. Paisley, personal communication, May 19, 2011]).

Roasting also adds to literacy because of the need for participants to locate themes about an opponent and/or the environment in order to be successful in a roasting session (Garner, 1983). Without the ability to recognize and use themes and issues to fit the occasion in a roasting session, a player cannot hold his own against an opponent. Roasting sessions place serious pressure on players' linguistic inventiveness. Relating this skill to interpreting fiction, progression from an elementary understanding of a fictional piece to a sophisticated explanation of it requires a growth from mere summarization of events to examining the themes, or meaning, of the text (Lee, 1991). Furthermore, criticism requires an analysis of the themes presented in a specific fictional piece. Transferring the potential skill gained in roasting to the classroom creates a greater ability to discover hidden themes in a text to allow for effective interpretation (Lee, 1991).

Conflict resolution. According to Garner (1983), roasting is a teaching device that educates participants in communication strategies for settling conflict in everyday social interactions. Garner's informants asserted that real conflicts are easily recognized by the anxiety or tension that is created; in this case, roasting becomes useful. Though it is said to be just a game, friction is created, encountered, and dealt with. The rhetorical ability of roasting exists in the fact that players promote conflict but settle it without fighting. Therefore, roasting has the potential to provide participants with conflict resolution skills that can transfer to real conflicts.

Garner's (1983) older informants stated that control in interpersonal conflict situations is founded upon being assertive and dominant. To them, what makes a true man or woman is that they are able to defend themselves both verbally and physically. To prevent being verbally victimized both in a roasting context and a real conflict context, a person must be willing to forcefully defend him or herself with words. Further, this bold verbal stance in a roasting context is imperative for three reasons: (a) A bold and assertive stance shows that the speaker is dedicated to an opinion; (b) one's status increases if that person can show he/she is able to influence others with high-quality verbal ability; and (c) to not back down from an aggressor shows the aggressor that he will not have an easy fight, and will in fact suffer in the process. Having control of one's emotions is needed to execute this bold stance and not lash out physically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Does Roasting Explain Bullying in the Black Community?

Bullying has different forms; these forms can be direct or more subtle (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Direct forms of bullying include hitting, pushing, kicking, and teasing. More subtle forms of bullying include spreading rumors and harming a person's self-esteem. One potential use of roasting is to arouse feelings of humiliation, shame, annoyance, or uselessness in an opponent (Kochman, 1969). According to Davis and Dollard (1940), "Players seek out the true weakness of the other person and jabs just where the skin is thinnest" (Golightly & Scheffler, 1948, p. 105). Consequently, it is suggested here that roasting is related to bullying in several ways in which will now be examined in some detail.

Marked by aggression. Bullying, as defined by Espelage and Holt (2001), is "a subset of aggressive behavior that has potential to cause psychological or physical harm to the recipient" (p. 127). This approach is important because many people do not view teasing as a form of bullying or potentially hurtful, despite findings that show teasing to produce high levels of distress among its recipients (Espelage & Asidao, 2001). Many scholars have found that roasting is marked by aggression (Berdie, 1947; Dollard, 1939; Garner, 1983; Golightly & Scheffler, 1948; Smitherman, 1977, 2000). Although participants mainly talk about victims to their face, rumors and gossip (i.e., indirect, subtle aggression) do play a part in the teasing. In one account, Dollard (1939) speaks about a boy named Steve who was accused by his peer group of committing homosexual acts in order to receive extra food at camp. Dollard continues that the other boys did not know if the acts were true, suggesting that it was probably just "malicious gossip" (p.

282); either way, the rumor provided a solid foundation for attacking Steve. The explanation Dollard gives is that, when roasting, "it is good technique to attack the other person at his weak point, if that be found" (p. 282). This strategy is typical of aggressive activities.

Repeated over time. Another trait of bullying is that it is repeated over time (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). In roasting, some people obtain reputations as being especially vulnerable to harassment and are usually favored as subjects (Berdie, 1947). The aforementioned point given about Steve is one illustration--his peer group, who used the rumor as ammunition against him, repeatedly attacked him. Garner's (1983) study also illustrates the trait of repetition within roasting. An older informant recalls hearing of a childhood friend who got into a fight over some words and was sent to the hospital as a result. After hearing of this, the informant responded: "That's the same Q who smiled at us years ago and never got upset when we talked about his mother. And *you know how bad we stayed on his case*" (p. 53; italics added). Apparently, Q did not recognize the implicit benefit of maintaining one's composure apparently developed through roasting. This suggests that not everyone develops the supposed skill of resolving real conflict taught through roasting.

Power imbalance. One key characteristic of bullying is the difference in power between perpetrator and victim, where it is hard for victims to defend themselves against their perpetrators (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). In the Black community, words are instruments for power or manipulating others (Folb, 1980; Garner 1983). Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) define power as "an individual's relative capacity to modify others' states by . . . administering punishments" (p. 265, as cited in Salmivalli &

Peets, 2009). By putting someone down through ritual insult, one gains both status within the peer group and a power over the person he or she ritually insulted (Folb, 1980). Ritually insulting others can also intimidate them into silence for fear of becoming the next victim. However, given the fluctuating and progressive nature of roasting sessions, individuals can easily lose the power they gain. (Note: The fact that power is more easily gained and lost in a roasting context slightly differs from a traditional bullying context).

Gaining status. Bullying is used to obtain social status among peers at large and within one's own peer group (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Similarly, one of the ways young Black males (and some White males [Bronner, 1978]) gain status within their peer group is through being very skilled at roasting (Dollard, 1939; Gerrig & Gibbs, 1988). On the other hand, a male can lose status if he fails to respond verbally to his challenger (Mitchell-Kernan, 1971).

In the African American community, those who display a way with words are looked up to and respected by their peers (Lefever, 1981):

> Within the expressive life-style, one available way to be socially rewarded and to attain a high-status position is to develop an outstanding language ability. And since the good use of language is so highly honored, language becomes the foundation for ritualized behavior. (p. 85)

This is vividly illustrated in hip hop culture, as those with outstanding lyrical ability are, for the most part, respected by both their peers and the hip hop community at large. That said, being adept at rap or roasting earns one the reputation of a "man of words" (Garner, 1983, p. 50).

Bystander effect. Scholars (Espelage, Green, & Polanin, 2011; Salmivalli &

Voeten, 2004) report how bullying is influenced and even perpetuated through the bystander effect (i.e., onlookers who directly assist or stand by idly during a bullying episode). In the same way, onlookers of ritual insult sessions have tremendous influence on its outcome as they can arouse the emotions of participants to the point of rage through their heckling and laughter (Dollard, 1939). The following vignette is an example:

> Joe: Nigger, if I was as ugly as you I would kill myself.
>
> James: You ain't so hot yourself. Your hair looks like a wire fence.
>
> Joe: Your paw's hair look like a wire fence, nigger.
>
> James: You are my paw.
>
> Joe: If I am your paw I must have done it to your maw.
>
> Onlookers: Oh, oh! He told you about your maw. I would not take that if I was you. Go ahead and tell him something back. (The dialogue becomes increasingly offensive and insults are tossed back and forth on the themes of illegitimacy and incest. More laughter from the onlookers, and then:) Why don't you two fight and get it over with? Hit him, Joe. If you don't hit him, James, you are a sissy. (They push the two boys and as a result a fight ensues). (p. 284)

During some instances, these boys appear willing to drop the incident if it were not for the chance of public mockery. But it is believed that most people, regardless of age, are prepared to see a fight, if they can just get others to do the fighting (Dollard, 1939). Garner (1983), on the other hand, found that onlookers not only instigated but they also sometimes *encouraged* participants who were losing a session.

Personalized attacks. Smith and Sharp (1994) describe bullying as when one

student says unpleasant things to another student. Dollard (1939) asserts that the aim of roasting is to bring up issues unpleasant to the other person. Though the early rules of roasting were to stay away from that which is an "accurate statement of reality" (Smitherman, 1977, p. 133), the activity surely includes personalized attacks against recipients (Kochman, 1983) not in the expected exaggerated form (Smitherman, 2000). Labov (1972) also points out that people do deviate from the rules; that is, it is likely for people to throw personal insults, and it is also likely for people to team up in a mass attack against one individual. Dollard gave examples of personalized attacks, as he observed boys, amongst each other, "jeer[ing] at everything from one's inferiority at checkers to another's withered leg and T.B." (p. 283). And there are consequences for breaking the rules, as is sometimes seen in an intense and uncontrollable response of a victim.

Humiliates victim. Hawker and Boulton (2000) found that bullying is related to quite a few psychosocial problems, including apprehension, depression, and decreased general and social self-esteem. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, it is not abnormal for a child to feel humiliated after being roasted (Kochman, 1969). Brown (1974) discussed the humiliating aspect of ritual insults in his autobiography:

> In many ways . . . the dozens is a mean game . . . It was a bad scene for the dude that was getting humiliated . . . [F]or dudes who couldn't [verbally defend themselves], it was like they were humiliated because they were born black and they turned around and got humiliated by their own people, which was really all they had left. But that's the way it is. Those that feel most humiliated humiliate others. (p. 205-206)

It is also not unusual for a roasting victim who cannot think of a retort to respond instead with physical aggression (Dollard, 1939). The design of roasting is such that participants become unsettled and feel anxious (Garner, 1983). Onlookers can also humiliate victims (Abrahams, 1990; Dollard, 1939).

Can escalate to physical aggression. In the bullying literature, there are two types of victims: nonaggressive (passive) and aggressive (proactive) victims (Olweus, 1978; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988). Aggressive victims are normally described as assertive, short-tempered, unruly, and tense (Schwartz, 2000). In response to a bully, fights sometimes break out because of their angry outbursts.

Aggressive recipients of roasting jokes also sometimes react physically, although certain situations are more likely to lead to fights than others. Most of Dollard's (1939) informants agreed that physical fighting is normally the result of roasting with out-group members. In the 1930s and 1940s, roasting was used with the sole intent to start fights with out-group members (Berdie, 1947). The individual being roasted (usually an out-group member) tended to react with physical aggression. Dollard elaborated on these fighting instances by adding it was mostly among middle-class Black boys, members of an exclusive out-group, and Black boys from the North who reacted with physical aggression, as opposed to lower class Blacks who roasted simply for fun. In contrast, inner-city teacher Herbert L. Foster observed that roasting sessions in his classrooms most likely led to fights or killings among *lower* class Blacks, while *middle* class Blacks were the ones doing it mostly for fun (Cole, 1974). Nevertheless, Foster maintained that roasting was the leading cause of fights at school.

Although fighting is usually the result of out-group members, it can also happen

among friends if the insults are too upsetting (Lefever, 1981). Ayoub and Barnett (1965) found that fighting transpires among people who share previous hostility toward one another; but where there is no former hostility, fighting is unlikely to occur.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework guiding this research stems from the aggressive communication model (Infante & Rancer, 1996). This model suggests that aggressive communication consists of four basic communication traits. These include two constructive traits (assertiveness and argumentativeness) and two destructive traits (hostility and verbal aggression). Due to the similarity between the destructive traits and roasting, this research posits that these traits help to better understand roasting and describe the adverse effects of verbal aggression.

Verbal aggressiveness is defined as "attacking the self-concepts of others in order to inflict psychological pain, such as humiliation, embarrassment, depression, and other negative feelings about self" (Infante & Wigley, 1986 as cited in Infante & Rancer, 1996, p. 323). Though framed within a game, one of the goals of roasting is to attack the self-concepts of others through the use of both personal and impersonal jokes that, many times, are geared to cause psychosocial pain (Golightly & Scheffler, 1948; Kochman, 1969). Both roasting and verbal aggressive messages include teasing, ridicule, profanity, obscenities, gestures, and nonverbal emblems (Garner, 1983; Infante & Rancer, 1996). These messages also include attacks on one's character, competence, background, and physical appearance (Infante & Rancer, 1996; Labov, 1972).

Individuals who engage in high levels of verbal aggressiveness use these destructive messages more frequently than those who engage in low levels of verbal aggressiveness (Infante, Riddle, Horvath, & Tumlin, 1992). More specifically, high verbal aggressives attack the competence, background, and physical appearance of others more often, and they also use teasing, ridicule, profanity, and nonverbal emblems at

higher rates (Infante et al., 1992). High verbal aggressives are thought to be desensitized to verbally aggressive messages and therefore do not consider them to be hurtful (Infante & Rancer, 1996). Some reasons why high verbal aggressives use verbal aggression are to (a) demonstrate dislike towards a target, (b) be mean to a target, (c) appear "tough," and (d) be apart of a discussion that turns into a verbal fight. From this perspective, roasting behavior can be viewed as a verbally aggressive activity that uses verbal aggression to attack the self-concept of others.

AIMS AND SETUP OF INVESTIGATION

This thesis examines the relation between roasting and bullying behavior. Because there is a lack of bullying scholarship surrounding ethnically diverse populations, the aim of this research was to construct a roasting measure called the Rivers Roasting Survey (RRS). It is believed here that a roasting measure is needed because (a) it is misguided to assume that bullying plays out the same in Black culture as it does in mainstream American culture; and (b) to my knowledge, one does not exist. This instrument should comply with the following criteria: (a) measure roasting attitudes, behaviors, and motivations, and their relation to depression and student school sense of belonging; (b) have great psychometric properties, as demonstrated by various measures of reliability and validity; and (c) be brief and acceptable for use among diverse student populations, as well as in large scale studies.

This thesis reports on two studies that were conducted to explore the current dynamics of roasting among school-age children and also examine the psychometric properties of the RRS. Study 1 focused on exploring the current dynamics of roasting among 12 middle school students for the purpose of item development. Study 2 focused on examining the internal consistency, reliability, and construct validity of the RRS through exploratory factor analysis in a diverse middle school population.

STUDY 1

METHODS

The first study examined roasting and its potential overlap with bullying among sixth and seventh grade African American males (*N*=12) in a Midwestern middle school. African American males were the focus of this study due to their familiarity and participation in roasting activities (Garner, 1983; Lefever, 1981; Smitherman, 1977). A main goal of this study was to explore the roasting behavior of these students in order to better understand the contemporary roasting experience. The researchers here sought to identify the reasons why these students roast, as well as the positive and negative antecedents of roasting. Survey information was collected to assess individual differences in roasting activities and beliefs about roasting. Focus group interviews were conducted to better understand why and how early adolescents roast, as well as the similarities and differences of roasting and bullying. These finding were then used for the item development of the RRS. The research questions addressed in this study were

a) Why do students roast?

b) What are students' experiences with roasting?

c) What are the psychosocial affects of roasting?

d) What are the similarities and differences of roasting and bullying, from a Black male student perspective?

It was hypothesized that (a) students roast for entertainment purposes, unaware of the positive skills they may be developing through roasting; (b) there are varied student experiences with roasting, some expressing largely positive experiences while others expressing largely negative experiences; (c) roasting is more likely to negatively effect

the self-esteem and self-confidence of students who do *not* like to roast; and (d) students will recognize the similarities between roasting and bullying, but they will be against the notion that the two are the same.

Participants. Participants included a random sample of 12 Black males (M_{age} = 13, age range: 12-14 years) from a Midwestern middle school. Three of these students identified as biracial, mixed with Black and White. Seven students were seventh graders, while the remaining five were eighth graders. Each participant returned a signed parental consent form, explaining the study and ensuring participant confidentiality. Each participant was given one $10 gift card as a reward for participating. This study adhered to the guidelines set by the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board.

Measures. This study used a mixed method approach of qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative portion was carried out through two semi-structured focus group interviews.

Focus groups. Seven students (five eighth graders) made up the first focus group and the four remaining students made up the second group (one student was unable to participate). In addition to other questions presented earlier, the focus group questions included: "In terms of content, is anything off-limits when talking about someone? If so, what?" and "Has a roasting session ever turned into a fighting session?" Based on student responses from the first focus group, several questions were modified and several other questions were added to the second focus group script. Overall, both focus groups were faithful to their scripts. But to keep the interviews conversational, the questions were not asked in order. The researchers also improvised in each interview by asking relevant questions that were not on the script, depending on student responses. This style allowed

for maximum rapport between students and researchers. The focus group interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. A thematic analysis was then used to develop a codebook of themes that emerged during the focus groups (Boyatzis, 1998).

Survey. One week prior to the focus groups, students were given a 19-item Likert-type Roasting Survey developed specifically for this study. The survey defined roasting as "Talking about someone in a group of 3 or more people through clever verbal putdowns. (For example, 'Yo Mama' jokes or someone saying 'You have a quaker oatmeal box head')." The purpose of this survey was to better understand each student's perception of roasting and to prevent groupthink bias. Some items included (a) "Being roasted by someone else makes me feel bad about myself. For example, I feel less self-confident"; (b) "Roasting someone else makes me feel good inside. For example, I feel happy"; and (c) "I do NOT like it when other people roast/treat me." Some of the survey responses informed some of the questions that were asked in the focus groups.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics. General descriptive statistics were conducted to identify general trends of the 12 students (see Table 1). When asked if the students liked it when other people roasted them, 100% (12 of 12) reported that they did not like being roasted. However, when asked if they enjoy roasting other people, 50% (6 of 12) reported that they do, 41.7% (5 of 12) reported that they enjoy roasting their friends, and 33.3% (4 of 12) reported that they enjoy roasting people they do not know. In addition, 66.6% (4 of 6) of students who do not enjoy roasting other people reported that they feel less self-confident after being roasted, while 100% (6 of 6) of students who enjoy roasting others reported they do *not* feel less self-confident after being roasted. When asked about their

rates of roasting within the last 7 days, 83.3% (10 of 12) of students reported they roasted someone, and 58.3% (7 of 12) of students reported they roasted two or more people at once. Further, 83.3% (10 of 12) of students reported they roast others to defend themselves (i.e., roast others after being roasted/attacked), and 41.7% (5 of 12) of students reported they roast others to protect themselves (i.e., roast others to keep from being roasted/attacked). In addition, 66.6% (4 of 6) of students who enjoy roasting other people roast others to protect themselves, while only 16.6% (1 of 6) of students who do not enjoy roasting other people roast others to protect themselves. In terms of frequency, for those students who enjoy roasting other people, 83.3% (5 of 6) of them have not been roasted in the last 7 days. However, one student who reported that he does not enjoy roasting other people was roasted by others "10 or more times" in the last 7 days. In addition, three students who do not enjoy roasting others were roasted by someone "1 or 2 times" in the last 7 days.

Focus group thematic analysis results. The students at this middle school refer to roasting by a different name: "breakin.'" This finding is consistent with the literature in that, across the US, roasting is typically called different things (Perceley, Dweck, & Ivey, 1995; Smitherman, 2000). The names of the students in this study (and the one mentioned teacher) have all been changed to pseudonyms.

Revenge. There are various reasons why students roast. To begin, revenge plays a major role. In response to the question "how powerful are words to you all," an outspoken student from the first group responded: "It depends on what they mean. Like roastin', to me, we do it for fun. But, like, sometimes we do it to get even. . . That's all what breakin' is: gettin' even" (Jemarcus, p. 3). Sometimes students get embarrassed

when roasted, so they seek to embarrass the person who embarrassed them. This is what is meant by "getting even." After someone gets even, an argument can ensue. Or the situation can turn into a roasting session, which is when two or more people or groups roast each other in competition. Roasting sessions, in general, can sometimes turn serious:

> Quincey: [L]ets say that [Sean] broke on [Researcher 1]. [Sean] say [Researcher 1] look like Joe Johnson [professional basketball player for the Atlanta Hawks] and [Researcher 1] say [Sean] looks like a Puma shoe or something.
>
> (laughter amongst group)
>
> Quincey: [Then Sean might say] "Bruh, keep on talking and I'mma knock you out!" Then he'll get mad.

Regardless of the above point, Jemarcus maintained that people in roasting sessions do not get mad at each other.

   Boredom. Other reasons why roasting sessions start include boredom or someone saying or doing something that merits being roasted, like "fall[ing] or something" (Cordell, p. 21).

> Jemarcus - [N]obody break for no reason. We don't just walk up to nobody and start breakin' him.
>
> Martel - There be a reason. Like, they'll have to say somethin'.
>
> Jemarcus - Yeah, everybody will have to do somethin'. Like Isaiah, we mess with him because he always tryin' to break. Him (points to Sean beside him), we mess with him because he always jumpin' in somebody conversation.
>
> Quincey - Tryin' to kill somebody (in reference to Sean).

Jemarcus - Right (laughter). And him (referring to Darius in the group), because he always tryin' to argue. Like we break on everybody because they did somethin' to us or something.

A majority of the first group said it is fun to both roast and be roasted, because the person being roasted sometimes responds with a dry joke, which creates more fun for those doing the roasting. Cordell explained how roasting sessions typically end: "They like kind of stop. But when [the losers] start walking away, [the winners] start breaking 'em again" (p. 23).

Because the jokes can get very personal, people should be cautious about roasting their friends:

Jemarcus: If you serious, don't break with your friend. [Because] a friend will probably tell something to you and [then] they gon' try to . . . put your business out there.

Researcher 2: Oh, 'cause they know you personally?

Jemarcus: Right! Like say me and him (referring to Sean) broke. Like, I don't know anything about him, but say I did and I'm like "Ok, but that's why you still pee in the bed!". . .[T]hat's going to embarrass him to where he don't want to talk no more.

Both groups reported that roasting their friends has no impact on their friendships. According to the second group, roasting is only competition when it is two friends who are roasting each other; because only two friends will know if each of them are serious or "just playing."

Social life. Roasting is also a way some people get along. The way Jemarcus added

to this thought implied that "getting along" means surviving social life in middle school:

> Like, ok, if you can break, then basically you not goin' to have no problems,
> because people mostly all talk, they ain't goin' [to] do nothin'. They just all talk.
> So if they try to break on you, if you break them back, they goin' leave you alone.
> (pauses then finishes his thought) Most likely.

Quincey supported Jemarcus's statement: "breakin' is another way to like--if somebody talkin' about you--it's another way to protect yourself too, and they ain't got nothin' else to say" (p. 55).

Anger. Other reasons students gave why people roast are it is a way to: "take out your anger in a comedian way" (Quincey, p. 63); retaliate when angered by someone; make other people laugh; and act "cool."

Roasting rules. According to the first group, certain content is off limits in roasting sessions. These things include family and serious issues:

> Quincey: How you goin' to say something about my mama if you don't know
> her?
> Jemarcus: Like if they say somethin' about your grandma and they *know* she
> dead, like you don't--that ain't funny.
> Researcher 2: Right. Like that's grounds for fighting?
> Jemarcus: But if they don't know and they say it then I'm not going to get mad at
> him 'cause he didn't know, but
> Researcher 2: (Finishes Jemarcus's thought) You gon' tell him.
> Jemarcus: Like "Dude, that's not funny. My grandma dead." And he'll be like
> "Aw, my fault" then leave it alone. Then [he'll] say somethin' else.

There are negative consequences for breaking this rule.

> Researcher 2: So there is a level of respect that has to go on [with roasting]?
>
> Quincey: There are boundaries
>
> Jemarcus: Yeah, boundaries.
>
> Researcher 2: So how do you define those boundaries? It's just the group decides?
>
> Quincey: You know what to say and what not to say to a person if you know
> about it.
>
> Jemarcus: Right! Right! You ain't got no business sayin' nothin' that you know
> nothin' about, basically. So that's what starts the fightin' and the conflict.

In contrast to the first group, the second group reported that there are *no* limits in roasting sessions, because "you could just say whatever you want" (Terrell, p. 13). The second group agreed that students talk about each other's mothers too.

Nobody is safe from being roasted. In the following vignette, Jemarcus contradicts an earlier statement he made about roasting people for no reason:

> Jemarcus: [I]f I'm bored, I'll be like "First person I see, I'm about to get to ridin'
> on."
>
> (laughter from group)
>
> Researcher 1: Even if you don't know that person?
>
> Jemarcus: Yeah! Like me and Brandon started doing it. We was walking down the
> street, we was like "Next car we see, and the person in it about to get broke."
> Then we just start breakin' people cars and stuff . . . I break on everybody. I don't
> care.

Even teachers get roasted:

Jemarcus: I always be breakin' teachers. Oh! We was breakin' on Mr. Roberts

'cause somebody asked him what sports he did in high school and me and

Andrew was like "Boys Scouts!" . . . We was like if he get mad at somebody, he

gonna lock 'em in a tent.

(laughter from group)

Sometimes teachers roast back: "(To the group) That substitute! Remember that dude that

was in science? . . . He said 'you got some professional kickball shoes.'. . .Yeah, that

dude can break. He was breakin' on Deandre. He made him quit" (Jemarcus, p. 8).

Roasting behavior influences. Many students reported having uncles, parents,

older and younger brothers, as well as other relatives who roast. Relatives can play an

influential role on a student's roasting behavior: "I think I inherited breakin.' 'Cause my

grandpa be breakin. Like, he was dropping us off at home and there was this little girl

ridin' the bike, he was like "When did raccoons [referring to the little girl] learn to ride

bikes?" (Jemarcus, p. 31). Jemarcus also talked about how he and his mom sometimes

roast each other:

I had a rap breakin' session with my mom once. That was so funny. She was like-

-we was just playin' though--she said somethin', somethin', somethin' and I was

like 'OK.' And I was like 'Mom, you a bum, you live on a rug/ Tell me why

without your wig, you look like a broke down thug?' That was a gag!

In contrast, students from the second group reported that their family members who roast

do not influence them to roast.

Positive attitudes toward roasting. A majority of the students in the first group

shared a positive attitude towards roasting. To them, roasting is fun, it is a hobby, and it

should continue. According to Martel, roasting can cheer people up: "When you're down, that'll make you laugh when you need to laugh" (p. 47). Some students expressed their frustration that teachers misconstrue roasting to be bullying, with one student hoping they would come to understand the activity. Students in this group do not see roasting as either bad or good, but instead as a neutral activity.

Those who enjoy roasting can take away useful skills from the activity. This includes developing "thick skin":

> Jemarcus: [Y]ou're learning how to not take stuff to heart. Like, somebody say somethin' about you it's like "ok"; [then] keep it goin'.
>
> Martel: Like you could knock it off.
>
> Jemarcus: Right! Like you could shake it off. Like "Ok, no pain."
>
> Quincey: Then they ain't got nothin' else to say.
>
> Researcher 2: So you learn how to take what people say to you outside your friends?
>
> Jemarcus: Right! Like what they say to you don't matter.

When asked "what would school be like if no one roasted?", some students in this group responded with "boring!" and "dumb."

Negative attitudes towards roasting. The second group, on the other hand, expressed negative attitudes towards roasting. Cordell elaborated on why he believes roasting is bad: "[Y]ou can, like, really get to somebody head. They can start [to] have a low self-esteem and stuff like that" (p. 14). Terrell spoke about the relentless nature of roasting when explaining why he feels the activity is annoying. To him, it gets irritating to have someone say the same things about someone else and not stop, when the person

being roasted just wants to be left alone. Lewis summed up roasting as "people who are playing but they [are] kind of being mean" (p. 25). A couple reasons why roasting is not fun to this group: "Because it's just making fun of other people" (Terrell, p. 3); and "[I]t could hurt someone and they not show 'em" (Cordell, p. 5). According to Cordell, roasting has the ability to hurt people's feelings. Students also feel the need to conceal the effects of being roasted by appearing stoic, which avoids further victimization.

Roasting can also disrupt a student from learning in class. This can happen because those who participate in roasting sessions "be getting loud and stuff. Everyone just starts yelling and stuff" (Charlie, p. 23). When this group was asked "What would school be like if no one roasted?", Cordell contradicted one of Jemarcus' above statements stating "no one would have any problems with anybody" (p. 22). Cordell also definitely feels he would be able to concentrate more on school.

Roasting and bullying. Both groups defined bullying differently. To the first group, bullying is physical harassment: "Bullyin' is like you picking on somebody or like you pushin' 'em" (Sean, p. 41); "Bullyin' [is picking on someone] you know you can whoop or somethin'" (Jemarcus, p. 41). The second group defined bullying as verbal harassment: "[Bullying is] when someone makes fun of someone" (Charles, p. 21). Cordell distinguished between roasting and bullying, saying "Breaking is, like, sometimes people joking around, and sometimes it's serious. And bullying, it's . . . all serious" (p. 21). Even still, the following vignette is one example of the students unintentionally blurring the line between roasting and bullying:

Jemarcus - [M]ost of the time, a bully is someone who is getting bullied at home or something, and they want to take out they anger on somebody else. But we

don't have no bullies here.

Researcher 2 - So if you picking on a kid constantly everyday, would that be bullying?

Jemarcus - Yeah. Yeah, matter of fact, that is bullying.

Researcher 2 - So if you break on somebody everyday, is that bullying?

Jemarcus - No! But the thing is before we break, we all say "We just playin'" or somethin'. Or we'll just laugh about it together.

Researcher 1 - So that excuses it? Like, if you say you're playin'?

Jemarcus - No [it doesn't], when you think about it.

Both groups reported that there are no bullies at their school. Both groups also admitted that saying "just playing" before roasting someone does not take the "sting" out of potentially hurtful jokes.

According to scholars, bullying is repeated physical and/or verbal harassment that can produce psychological or physical harm (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). One of the objects of roasting is to get someone so mad that they cry (Brown, 1974). The first group talked about being relentless enough to do this to someone:

Researcher 2 - Why was Mike cryin'?

Lemont - Because he is weird.

Jemarcus - Because [Lemont] kept on making fun of 'em all yesterday at recess and at lunch. He was like--cause [Mike] got something wrong with his chest or something [and] at basketball practice he used to be like--he'll run and he be lookin' like he be cryin'. He be like (impersonates Mike)

(laughter amongst group)

Jemarcus - And Lemont kept makin' fun of 'em

(laughter amongst group)

Jemarcus - [Lemont] was like, "If [Mike] hurt his hand and he runnin' home, he

be like (impersonates Mike running home)."

(laughter amongst group)

Jemarcus - That's a gag!

To this group, it seems that repeatedly being roasted makes one immune to potentially

hurtful jokes:

Researcher 1 - So, in terms of self-esteem, [roasting] has no effect on one's self-

esteem?

Jemarcus - Some people. If you weak!

Researcher 2 - (To Lemont) Yeah, like the person you made cry, do you think that

affected them emotionally?

Jemarcus - Yeah, that affected 'em! He so

Lemont - (smacks teeth) That ain't affect Mike! (referring to how Mike dealt with

being roasted). Mike done got broke on so many times. Deandre break on him all

the time.

Jemarcus - Yeah.

Martel - (Adding to Lemont and Jemarcus' statements) The whole school!

This justification was perpetuated through the treatment of one of the student's in the

actual focus group.

In the first group, Sean was the fall guy. Jemarcus admitted that they had been

roasting him for years. Sean's response to whether or not he likes being roasted was rather vague: "From time to time it's cool" and "It don't bother me anymore. Sometimes it do" (Sean, p. 28). But his reactions to being roasted were less vague. These students reported that Sean often responds to being roasted with physical threats. (Terrell, in the second group, admitted to responding to being roasted in a similar fashion. He said that when his little brother tries to roast him, he chases him around with scissors). There were also occasions of Sean wanting to fight Darius after one of their roasting sessions. (Note that Sean often chose to roast Darius when roasted by someone with possessed superior roasting ability, like Jemarcus).

Sean - What you gon' buy with your [gift card] Darius?

Darius - (smacks teeth) Man, you finna go buy some hair gel! Trying to say something to me.

(laughter from group)

Sean - You finna go buy some grease for your fat man-titty, bruh.

(laughter from group)

Quincey - Deeeng! Jemarcus, slap some baby oil on it! (laughter)

. . .

Sean - (At Darius) You finna go buy a man-bra, bruh!

(laughter from group)

Darius - Your shoes got bunji cords!

(laughter from group)

(Darius and Sean get increasingly physical as they point exactly to what they are roasting the other about)

Jemarcus - See, they get embarrassed and get ready to fight. You can see how when somebody get salty [or mad], they try to fight. You seen that? You noticed that when [Darius] started getting laughs, [Sean] got mad and tried to smack him.

According to a student in the second group, teachers should stop students from roasting because it can become physical. Another student mentioned that most of the fights at school occurred because of roasting.

BRIEF DISCUSSION

Many themes were revealed through both the survey and focus group interviews. Consistent with the literature, roasting occurs between friends, strangers, groups, and family. Also, adding to the literature, roasting can happen between teachers and students. Roasting perceptions and behaviors varied by each student. Some students reported having a positive attitude toward roasting while others reported having a negative attitude toward roasting. The themes revealed that students roast others for fun, for revenge, to protect themselves, to defend themselves, to build character, and because someone does or says something outside of the norm that merits being roasted. Further, also adding to the literature, roasting can have adverse psychosocial effects on students: it can lower students' self-esteem, hurt students' feelings, instigate physical fights, and can disrupt a student from learning in class. Though roasting has both positive and negative outcomes, roasting behavior and outcomes are similar to that of bullying. This finding supports the theory I raised in the literature review.

STUDY 2

METHODS

The main aim of Study 2 was to examine the reliability, internal consistencies, and construct validity of the RRS. Using the data from Study 1, items were written for the purpose of instrument development. In Study 2, the goal was to see how roasting attitudes and behaviors vary among students from different backgrounds.

Convergent and divergent validity of the newly developed instrument was examined through statistical analyses. Convergent validity was evaluated with correlations between the roasting factors and the Illinois Bully, Fight, and Victimization scales and also the School Sense of Belonging scale. Divergent validity was evaluated with correlations between the roasting factors, and also through multivariate analyses of roasting differences based on race and gender.

It was hypothesized that (a) the roasting items developed for this study would measure roasting attitudes, behaviors, and motivations; (b) roasting perpetration would be positively correlated with bully perpetration; (c) roasting victimization would be positively correlated with bully victimization; (d) roasting victimization would be positively associated with depression; and (e) items that measure a positive attitude towards roasting would be negatively correlated with student school sense of belonging. We also expected to find lower positive attitudes towards roasting among non-Black racial groups.

Participants. Participants in Study 2 included 141 seventh and eighth grade students (M_{age} = 13, age range = 12-15 years; *Males n* = 69). Over half of the participants were African American/Black (*n* = 77; 54.6%), 32 were White (22.7%), 22 identified as

Multiracial (15.6%), 7 were Hispanic/Latino (5%), 1 was Asian (.7%), and 1 was American Indian or Alaska Native (.7%); data on ethnic group membership was not available for 1 student. Participants were gained through waver of active consent. Each participant was given one highlighter as a reward for participating. This study adhered to the guidelines set by the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board.

Measures

    Rivers Roasting Survey (RRS). The survey developed for this study is a 45-roasting-item self-report intended to measure roasting attitudes, behaviors, and motivations, and also the relationship between roasting, student school sense of belonging, depression, and ethnic identity. This survey is based on student survey and semi-structured focus group responses, personal investigations of roasting in my middle and high school years, and a review of the roasting literature. The survey defined roasting as "Talking about someone in a group of 3 or more people through clever verbal putdowns. (For example, 'Yo Mama' jokes or someone saying 'You have a quaker oatmeal box head')." Students were asked how often they roast others, how often they have been roasted by others, how being roasted makes them feel, and if they think school would be better or worse if no one roasted, to name a few. Response options include: "Never", "1 or 2 times", "3 or 4 times", "5 or 6 times", "7 or more times", and "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Strongly agree."

    University of Illinois Bully Scale. Six items from the nine-item Illinois Bully Scale (Espelage & Holt, 2001) was used to measure the frequency of teasing, name-calling, social exclusion, and rumor spreading. Students are asked how often in the past 30 days they teased other students, upset other students for the fun of it, excluded others

from their group of friends, and helped harass other students, etc. Response options include "Never", "1 or 2 times", "3 or 4 times", "5 or 6 times", and "7 or more times." The construct validity of this scale has been supported via exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Factor loadings in the development sample for these items ranged from .52 to .75 and this factor accounted for 31% of the variance in the factor analysis (Espelage & Holt, 2001). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87 was found for the development sample and the Bullying Scale correlated .65 with the Youth Self-Report Aggression Scale (Achenbach, 1991) and was not significantly correlated with the Victimization Scale (r = .12). The scale consistently emerges as distinct from physical aggression scales (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80 was found for the current sample.

University of Illinois Fight Scale. Three items from the nine-item University of Illinois Bully Scale (UIBS; Espelage & Holt, 2001) was used to measure the frequency of fighting. Researchers developed this scale based on interviews with middle school students, a review of the extant bullying measures literature, and extensive factor analytic investigations (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Espelage et al., 2003). Students were asked to indicate how often in the past 30 days they have engaged in each behavior (e.g., "I got in a physical fight." and "I upset other students for the fun of it."). Response options included "Never", "1 or 2 times", "3 or 4 times", "5 or 6 times", and "7 or more times." These response options assessed bullying persistence. Higher scores indicated more self-reported bullying behaviors. Espelage and Holt (2001) found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87 and the Bullying Scale was found to be moderately correlated (r = .65) with the Youth Self-Report Aggression Scale (Achenbach, 1991), suggesting

convergent validity. Concurrent validity of this scale was established with significant

correlations with peer nominations of aggression. This scale converged with peer

nomination data (Espelage et al., 2003). This scale was not significantly correlated with

the Illinois Victimization Scale (r = .12), and thus provided evidence of discriminant

validity (Espelage et al., 2003). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76 was found for the

current sample.

University of Illinois Victimization Scale. Victimization from peers was measured

using the University of Illinois Victimization Scale (UIVS; Espelage & Holt, 2001).

Students are asked how often the following things have happened to them in the past 30

days: "Other students called me names"; "Other students made fun of me"; and "Other

students picked on me". Response options include "Never", "1 or 2 times", "3 or 4

times", "5 or 6 times", and "7 or more times." Factor loadings ranged from .55 through

.92 for these items, which accounted for 6% of the variance in the factor analysis. Higher

scores indicate more self-reported victimization. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89

was found for the current study.

Orpinas Modified Depression Scale. This 6-item scale (Orpinas, 1993) asks

adolescents to indicate how often they felt or acted certain ways in the previous 30 days.

Examples include: "Did you feel happy", and "Did you feel hopeless about your future".

Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale with options ranging from 1

(Never) through 5 (Almost Always). Scores are calculated by summing all responses,

with a possible range of 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating more depressive

symptoms. The Modified Depression Scale has demonstrated good internal consistency

(α = .74) when administered to adolescents aged 10 to 18 (Orpinas, 1993). A Cronbach's

alpha coefficient of .85 was found for the current study.

School Sense of Belonging. Perceived belonging at school was measures with 4 of the 20 items from the Psychological Sense of School Members Scale (Goodenow, 1993). Students are asked how much they agree with the following four statements: 1) "I feel proud of belonging to this school," 2) "I am treated with as much respect as other students," 3) "The teachers here respect me," and 4) "There is at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem." Response options include "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Agree," or "Strongly Agree." A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .65 was found for the current sample.

Revised Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). The Revised MEIM (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999) is a 12-item self-report measure of ethnic identity. This measure is composed of three subscales: (a) affirmation and belonging (sense of group membership and attitudes toward the individual's group); (b) ethnic identity achievement (the extent to which a person has achieved a secure and confident sense of his or her ethnicity); and (c) ethnic behaviors (activities related to group membership). Participants are asked to indicate whether they "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Disagree", or "Strongly disagree" with each item. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85 was found for the development sample. Similarly, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .86 was found for the current study.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics. General descriptive statistics were conducted to identify the trends of this sample towards roasting. A majority of the participants (75.4%) do not like it when others roast them. However, 73.5% reported roasting someone else within the 7

days prior to this study. Most of the participants (64.5%) try not to do or say anything

that would make others roast them. Over half (52.5%) feel bad inside after roasting

someone else. For example, they feel guilty for saying what they said to the other person.

Most participants (60.9%) also do not believe saying "I'm just playing" to someone

before roasting that person excuses a potentially hurtful joke. In other words, in contrast

to the literature (Percelay, Dweck, & Ivey, 1995; Smitherman, 2000), the play context of

roasting does not justify hurtful jokes. In the 7 days prior to our survey, 51.4 % of the

participants roasted someone else because they were angry (8.6% of these students

roasted someone else 10 or more times because they were angry). Many of the

participants (65.3%) reported that when other students start roasting in class, it distracts

them from learning. Many of the students (66.4%) also reported that

teachers/administrators should stop students from roasting in school. Finally, 70.9% of

the students reported that school would be a better place if no one roasted.

   Exploratory factor analysis. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted

on the 45 roasting items using principal axis factoring in SPSS with an orthogonal

rotation (Varimax). Factor loadings (See Table 2) of .40 or greater were retained with the

exception of cross-loadings. Items with cross-loadings of .40 or higher on multiple

factors were removed from the analysis completely. Using percentage of explained

variance and a scree plot helped to justify retaining three factors that emerged: (a) *Pro-*

Roasting, (b) *Uneasy,* and (c) *Lowered Self-Confidence*.

   Pro-Roasting. Items in this category concern students who hold a positive attitude

towards roasting (i.e., roasting is liked, perpetuated, and the negative effects of the

activity are downplayed). This factor also measured roasting frequency. These items are

presented in Table 3. Items include "I enjoy roasting other people"; "I enjoy roasting on my friends"; and "I enjoy roasting people I do not know." Factor loadings for these items ranged from .36 to .68 and this factor accounted for 36.52% of the explained variance in the factor analysis with an Eigenvalue of 6.94. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .88 was determined for this factor.

Uneasy. Items in this category concern students who (a) feel socially anxious when around others who are roasting, (b) feel guilty after roasting others, and (c) do not think the play context of roasting excuses potentially hurtful jokes. These items (See Table 4) included "When I am around people who are roasting each other, it makes me feel nervous or uneasy"; "Roasting on someone else makes me feel bad inside. For example, I feel guilty for saying what I said to the other person"; and the reverse score of "Saying 'I'm just playing' to someone before or after roasting that person excuses a potentially hurtful joke. That person should not be bothered by what was said." Factor loadings for these items ranged from .42 to .86 and this factor accounted for 10.81% of the variance in the factor analysis with an Eigenvalue of 2.10. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .81 was determined.

Lowered self-confidence. These items (See Table 5) allude to roasting victimization producing a negative psychological affect in the student: "When others roast me about my appearance, it makes me uncomfortable" and "Being roasted by someone else makes me feel bad about myself. For example, I feel less self-confident." Factor loadings for these items ranged from .69 to .87 and this factor accounted for 7.38% of the variance in the factor analysis with an Eigenvalue of 1.40. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .86 was determined.

Convergent and divergent validity. Convergent validity was evaluated with correlations between the roasting factors and the Illinois Bully, Fight, and Victimization scales and the School Sense of Belonging scale. In particular, I hypothesized that

Hypothesis 1: The Pro-Roasting factor would be positively correlated with the Bully and Fight scales.

Hypothesis 2: The Uneasy and Lowered Self-Confidence factors would be negatively correlated with the Bully and Fight scales.

Hypothesis 3: The Pro-Roasting factor would be negatively correlated with the Victimization scale.

Hypothesis 4: The Uneasy and Lowered Self-Confidence factors would be positively correlated with the Victimization scale.

Hypothesis 5: The Pro-Roasting factor would be negatively correlated with the School Sense of Belonging scale.

Correlations between the roasting factors, the Illinois Bully, Fight, and Victimization scales and School Sense of Belonging scale are presented in Table 6. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the Pro-Roasting factor was significantly positively associated with the Bully Perpetration scale ($r = .46$) and the Fight scale ($r = .48$). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the Uneasy factor was significantly negatively associated with the Bully Perpetration scale ($r = -.38$) and the Fight scale ($r = -.41$). Similarly, the Lowered Self-Confidence factor was negatively associated with the Bully scale ($r = -.09$) and the Fight scale ($r = -.04$). Consistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4, the Victimization scale was negatively associated with the Pro-Roasting factor ($r = -.04$), but significantly positively associated with the Lowered Self-Confidence factor ($r = .26$). There was a positive

association between the Victimization scale and the Uneasy factor ($r = .13$), however this was not significant. Finally, consistent with Hypothesis 5, there was a significantly negative association between the Pro-Roasting factor and the School Sense of Belonging scale ($r = -.17$).

Divergent validity was evaluated with correlations between the roasting factors intended to measure distinct constructs. The correlations between the factors should be low because the constructs are distinct (Messick, 1989). Correlations between the roasting factors are presented in Table 6. Divergent validity was partly supported by the correlation analyses. Specifically, the Pro-Roasting factor was significantly negatively associated with the Lowered Self-Confidence factor ($r = -.40$) and the Uneasy factor ($r = -.58$). But the Lowered Self-Confidence factor was significantly positively associated with the Uneasy factor ($r = .48$).

Race and gender differences on the RRS subscales were calculated to demonstrate the scales' divergent validity. Two separate multivariate analyses were conducted (See Tables 7 through 10). In the first MANOVA, race was entered as an independent variable. In the second MANOVA, gender was the independent variable. In both MANOVAs, RRS subscales were dependent variables. MANOVA results (Wilks' Lambda = .75; $F[3, 130] = 4.39$, $p = .01$, $\eta p2 = .09$) revealed racial differences for the Pro-Roasting factor ($F[3, 130] = 11.84$, $p = .01$, $\eta p2 = .22$) and the Uneasy factor ($F[3, 130] = 4.91$, $p = .003$, $\eta p2 = .10$), with African Americans scoring higher in Pro-Roasting ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .58$) than multiracial students ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .53$), Whites ($M = 1.66$, $SD = .51$), and Hispanics ($M = 1.51$, $SD = .41$). In the Uneasy factor, Whites scored the highest ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .83$), followed by Hispanics ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .67$), multiracial

students ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .68$), then African Americans ($M = 2.27$, $SD = .73$). MANOVA results (Wilks' Lambda = .93; $F[1, 135] = 3.12$, $p = .03$, $\eta p2 = .07$) also revealed a gender difference for the Lowered Self-Confidence factor ($F[1, 135] = 9.04$, $p = .003$, $\eta p2 = .06$), with females scoring higher ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .90$) than males ($M = 2.24$, $SD = .85$).

BRIEF DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to inspect the internal consistency and construct validity of the RRS with a diverse sample of middle school students for the initial construction of a roasting measure. Using an exploratory factor analysis, three factors emerged: Pro-Roasting ($\alpha = .88$), Uneasy ($\alpha = .81$), and Lowered Self-Confidence ($\alpha = .86$). Convergent validity of the new instrument was supported through the correlational analyses of the roasting subscales, Illinois Bully, Fight, and Victimization scales, School Sense of Belonging scale, and Depression scale. The Pro-Roasting subscale was positively associated with bully and fight perpetration, but negatively associated with bully victimization. In contrast, the Uneasy and Lowered Self-Confidence subscales were positively associated bully victimization, but negatively associated with bully and fight perpetration. Divergent validity was supported through intercorrelation analyses of the roasting subscales, and multivariate analyses of race and gender differences of the instrument.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Study 1

This multistudy investigation attempted to examine the possible relation between roasting and bullying. Study 1 was based on the survey and semi-structured focus group responses of 12 middle school students (7 seventh graders, 5 eighth graders) who had the opportunity to share their thoughts, experiences, and the psychosocial effects of roasting, a Black oral tradition. This study represents the first effort to begin a discussion around culture-specific bullying. According to the students in Study 1, no one is safe from being roasted, including teachers. Critical issues are the only content that is off limits, such as talking about an ailing or dead relative. Some students reported that talking about mothers is also off limits. This last finding is consistent with a past study (Folb, 1980) where participants reported they do not talk about mothers when roasting. Some reasons why students initiate roasting episodes and/or sessions are because they are fun, to protect themselves, to defend themselves, and because someone did or said something outside of the norm that merits being roasted. Consistent with Smitherman (2000) this study also found that roasting can serve as a needed laugh and/or a way to relieve tension for students.

The Study 1 survey data suggest that the role of emotional connectedness is important in understanding the affects of roasting. Students were less likely to report losing self-confidence after being roasted if the person(s) roasting them were not friends. On the other hand, when a student is being roasted by someone he considers a friend, the aggressive message he receives is more likely to hurt. Furthermore, students were more likely to feel guilty after roasting friends than non-friends. Additional noteworthy

findings from the survey revealed that all of the participants did not like it when other people roasted them, while half of the participants reported that they enjoyed roasting other people. Even still, there was some divergence in the focus group responses here, as some students reported that it *is* in fact fun to be roasted at times because the person being roasted sometimes responds with a dry joke, creating more fun for those initiating the roasting. Perhaps this divergence is due to some students not wanting to appear weak in front of their male peers. Levant (2005) noted that many boys are preoccupied with creating power and looking tough among their peers. The divergence could also be attributed to a desire for students to prevent future victimization.

Those who enjoy roasting others are not roasted as much as those who do *not* enjoy roasting. It appears that those who enjoy roasting are skilled at the activity. Perhaps, the superior verbal ability and aggressive disposition of those who enjoy roasting intimidates others from roasting them. Those who enjoy roasting were also more likely to report roasting to protect themselves (Folb, 1980). In order to protect one's self-esteem in a high-occasion roasting environment, a person may have to initiate roasting episodes to silence opponents before being attacked first. Folb noted that in Black culture "who you are (and very often how well you survive) depends so heavily on how well you talk" (p. 90).

Roasting serves other seemingly constructive purposes for the students in this study. Roasting can help an individual develop "thick skin." It can also help participants "think fast on their feet." More research needs to be conducted to determine who benefits from roasting. Despite its benefits, the findings of this study suggest that roasting also has negative outcomes. The activity draws many conceptual similarities to bullying, defined

as physical and/or verbal harassment that can produce physical or psychological harm (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Roasting can lower students' self- esteem, hurt students' feelings, disrupt a student from learning in class, and also lead to physical fights. Categorized as relational aggression in the bullying literature (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009), rumors are also used as inspiration for roasting someone. In this study, a rumor was spread about Darius eating his ear wax on a field trip. Although Darius contended that this was not true, "the next day the whole school knew" (Martel, p. 35) and some of the other participants in this study stayed on his case about it. Given that the two groups in this study defined bullying differently—one referring to physical harassment as the marker and the other pointing to verbal harassment—it is concluded here that middle school students in this sample could benefit from a clearer understanding of what it means to bully.

Finally, there was preliminary evidence that roasting is supported by the verbal aggressiveness model (Infante & Rancer, 1996). It is concluded here that people who enjoy roasting are generally individuals who are high in verbal aggressiveness. They roast more often, and are not as psychologically affected when roasted, perhaps because they do not view verbally aggressive messages (i.e., roasting) as hurtful. It can also be argued that developing "thick skin" from being roasted is equal to being "desensitized" to verbally aggressive messages. In contrast, those who do *not* enjoy roasting are considered low verbal aggressives. They roast much less frequently (if at all), and they are more inclined to be adversely affected both psychologically and emotionally after being roasted. Students who feel less self-confident after being roasted do not roast others to protect themselves (i.e., they do not initiate roasting episodes or sessions). Perhaps, these

students lack roasting ability.

Implications. Current debates are ensuing at the national level around identifying a consistent definition for bullying to be adopted by school administrators and prevention scientists. This exploratory study suggests that African-American boys might not identify their roasting behavior as bullying and may not endorse being a target or an instigator of bullying when presented with a definition. This might lead to a misrepresentation of the prevalence of bullying in some schools when a generic definition of bullying is presented. This suggests that much more research needs to be conducted to understand how roasting or breakin' attitudes and behaviors relate to other forms of aggression among middle schools students. The current study adds to the existing bullying literature by analyzing bullying from a cultural perspective. It is important to the area of bullying because roasting can make it easier for someone to talk about/tease others outside of a roasting context and not think anything of it. That said, teachers and administrators can benefit from an understanding of the cultural significance of roasting in the Black community and that Black students who bully others outside a roasting context may simply perceive themselves as roasting as opposed to bullying.

Study 2

The purpose of this study was to inspect the internal consistency and construct validity of the RRS with a diverse sample of middle school students for the initial construction of a roasting measure. We also sought to examine the relation between roasting and bullying behavior. All of our hypotheses were supported by the findings in this study. The Verbal Aggressiveness Model also supports the findings in this study.

Using an exploratory factor analysis, three factors emerged: Pro-Roasting (α = .88),

Uneasy ($\alpha = .81$), and Lowered Self-Confidence ($\alpha = .86$). The underlying difference between the Uneasy factor and the Lowered Self-Confidence factor is that the Uneasy factor focuses on a student being around roasting and roasting others, whereas the Lowered Self-Confidence factor focuses on a student actually being roasted. Both factors have a negative association with roasting. It is speculated here that children who fall in the Uneasy factor are socially anxious when around others who are roasting because they are afraid of becoming the next victim. There is also a difference between the motivation to roast within the Pro-Roasting factor and the Uneasy factor respectively. It is speculated here that the main intent to roast characterized by the Pro-Roasting factor is for fun. In other words, people who favor roasting do it largely for entertainment purposes. In contrast, we speculate that the main intent to roast characterized by the Uneasy factor is to defend oneself from being roasted by other students. In other words, these students largely perceive and use roasting as a survival mechanism when necessary. They roast others because they have to, not because they like to or think it is fun.

This study supports the notion that roasting and bullying are associated. A positive moderate relationship was found between roasting and bully perpetration and fighting. Pro-roasting attitudes are associated with greater bully and fight perpetration compared to negative attitudes towards roasting. Further, pro-roasting attitudes were less associated with feelings of guilt after roasting someone. Based on the results in Study 1, this could imply that students with pro-roasting attitudes frequently roast people they do not consider their friends. Pro-roasting attitudes were also less associated with a change in self-confidence when roasted by someone else. In contrast, feeling socially anxious when around others who are roasting was less associated with bully perpetration and fighting,

but more associated with feeling less self-confident when roasted. In relation, feeling socially anxious when around others who are roasting and feeling less self-confident when roasted were more associated with bully victimization than pro-roasting attitudes.

This study also revealed roasting differences based on race and gender. Black students were more likely to report a positive attitude towards roasting than other racial groups, and less likely to report being socially anxious when around others who are roasting. According to the literature, this makes sense because roasting is a Black oral tradition that outgroups do not participate in as much. In relation, the focus groups in Study 1 revealed that roasting happens "everywhere" in Black groups; further, "it don't really happen at school like it does out of school." Also, according to Labov (1972), roasting does not take up as much time in White groups as it does in Black groups. In terms of gender, this research found that girls are more likely to report feeling uncomfortable and less self-confident when roasted. This finding is also supported by the focus groups in Study 1 where the male participants said girls are more likely to fight after roasting sessions because "girls got more emotions," or they are more likely to take the jokes seriously and get their feelings hurt.

The last hypothesis of the current study was supported by the relationship found between roasting and school sense of belonging. Due to the significantly negative association between these variables, it is speculated here that students who report a positive attitude towards roasting and frequently participate in the activity tend to not have strong grades. However, more research needs to be done to support this finding. Perhaps roasting is a way for these students to distract themselves in class when (a) they do not like the subject being taught, (b) they do not like the teacher, or (c) they do not

understand how to do the work. This study lacks generalizability due to the sample being taken from only one urban middle school. However, it adds to the existing bullying literature by analyzing bullying from a cultural perspective.

CONCLUSION

Roasting is framed within the context of a game, where participants are expected to endure the pain caused by insults. These insults may include attacks on an individual's personal attributes, clothing, social status (or lack thereof), and family members, to name a few. When consenting individuals engage in roasting games, it may be interpreted as a fun activity. However, when non-consenting individuals become targets of roasting behaviors these episodes mimic bullying behaviors in many ways. In order to help improve the social climate in schools, students (and adults) who favor roasting need to be sensitive to the line between consenting and non-consenting individuals and respect a non-consenting individual's wish to not engage in roasting behavior.

Berdie's (1947) participants, all of whom admitted to habitually roasting others, described the activity as "'mean,' 'low,' 'nasty,' and in general not socially acceptable" (p. 121). Johnson (1941) stated "being put in the dozens is one of the worst things that can happen to someone" (as cited in Golightly & Scheffler, 1948, p. 104). Finally, author Ossie Guffy (1971) recalled a childhood memory of her grandfather telling her and her friends his thoughts on ritual insults after catching them play as kids:

> "When I was coming up," Grandpa said, "I heard about that game, only I heard about it the way it used to be, and I heard how it started and why it started. It was a game slaves used to play, only they wasn't just playing for fun. They was playing to teach themselves and their sons how to stay alive. The whole idea was to learn to take whatever the master said to you without answering back or hitting him, 'cause that was the way a slave had to be, so's he could go on living. It maybe was a bad game, but it was necessary. It ain't necessary now." (as cited in

Lefever, 1981, p. 79)

For centuries, slave mothers and fathers made disparaging remarks to their children in order to protect them from hostile slave masters (Leary, 2005). Yet, what initially started as a necessary adjustment to a cruel and unsafe society, roasting has later been passed down through generations where the benefits may not outweigh the costs. Leary comments that some behaviors adopted from slavery times for survival but still used today can inhibit the Black community from flourishing. Roasting may be one of these behaviors that should be "replaced with behaviors which promote and maximize [the Black community's] progress" (p. 16). Further, the principle of being cognizant of the words one uses against another person would obviously not only be useful in the Black community but in all communities, especially within primary and secondary schools. This could lead to both improved student to student and student to teacher interactions.

However, given the value placed on high verbal ability in the Black community, a challenge to educators, researchers, and policymakers will be how to maximize the benefits gained from roasting while also eliminating its costs. Some suggestions raised here are (a) apply cultural responsive teaching (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Santamaria, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2007) by allowing for more student verbal creativity in assignments (e.g., verbal presentations); (b) decrease down time in classrooms where roasting is an issue, because boredom fuels roasting perpetration; (b) implement a zero-tolerance policy for roasting in classrooms. There is usually zero-tolerance for saying "gay" and "homo" to describe things or people, but there is nothing to prevent a student from tearing down a classmate's self-esteem through roasting. This should not be the case; (c) teachers should have candid discussions with students about roasting (i.e., how it

started, why it started, its place in society) and its power to hurt others. Just because the activity is portrayed as harmless in the media does not make it so; and (d) adults in the school need to set the example. If the adults are roasting each other and also the students, they cannot expect for the students to refrain from roasting others either.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Study 1 Roasting Survey Frequencies

Survey Items	Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 5 times	10 or more times
In the last 7 days, I roasted (or treated) another person.	2	4	5	1
In the last 7 days, I roasted (or treated) two or more people at once.	5	4	2	1
In the last 7 days, I have been roasted (or treated) by another person.	7	3	1	1
In the last 7 days, I have been roasted (or treated) by two or more people at once.	8	2	2	-

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoy roasting/ treating other people.	-	6	5	1
I do NOT enjoy roasting/treating other people.	1	5	5	1
I enjoy roasting/ treating my friends.	1	-	4	7
I do NOT enjoy roasting/treating my friends.	1	-	6	5
I enjoy roasting/ treating people I do not know.	1	3	6	2

I do NOT enjoy roasting/treating people I do not know.	3	4	4	1
I like it when other people roast/treat me.	-	-	3	9
I do NOT like it when other people roast/treat me.	6	6	-	-
I roast/treat others to *defend* myself against others who roast/treat me.	3	7	2	-
I roast/treat others to *protect* myself against others who roast/treat me.	2	3	6	1
Roasting someone else makes me feel good inside. For example, I feel happy.	1	2	6	3
Roasting someone else makes me feel bad inside. For example, I feel guilty for saying what I said to the other person.	-	6	5	1

Being roasted by someone else makes me feel good about myself. For example, I feel self-confident.	-	1	5	6
Being roasted by someone else makes me feel bad about myself. For example, I feel less self-confident.	1	3	5	3

Note. "Treating" was used as a synonym for "roasting" in the survey because the authors' prior knowledge of the research location led them to believe that the participants in this study would be more familiar with "treating" to describe Black ritual insults as opposed to roasting. "Treating" was used to clear up any possible confusion for the participants.

Table 2

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis With Varimax Rotation of Roasting Subscales

Item	Pro-Roasting	Uneasy	Lowered Self-Confidence
I do NOT enjoy roasting/breaking on my friends.	0.68		
I do NOT enjoy roasting/breaking on people I do not know.	0.68		
I enjoy roasting/breaking on other people.	-0.67		
I do NOT enjoy roasting/breaking on other people.	0.66		
I enjoy roasting/breaking on people I do not know.	-0.65		
I enjoy roasting/breaking on my friends.	-0.60		
I like it when other people roast/break me.	-0.59		
I do NOT like it when other people roast/break me.	0.59		
When others roast/break on me, I usually ignore it.	0.42		
I roast/break others to protect myself against others who roast/break me.	-0.40		
Being roasted/broken by someone else makes me feel good about myself. For example, I feel self-confident.	-0.36		
I try not to do or say things that will make others roast me.	0.36		
When I am around people who are roasting/breaking on each other, it does NOT make me feel nervous or uneasy.		0.86	
When I am around people who are roasting/breaking on each other, it makes me feel nervous or uneasy.		-0.75	

Roasting/breaking on someone else makes me feel bad inside. For example, I feel guilty for saying what I said to the other person.	-0.53	
Saying "I'm just playing" to someone before or after roasting that person excuses a potentially hurtful joke. That person should not be bothered by what was said.	0.42	
When others roast/break on me about my appearance, it makes me uncomfortable.		0.87
When others roast/break on me about my appearance, it does NOT make me uncomfortable.		-0.80
Being roasted/broken by someone else makes me feel bad about myself. For example, I feel less self-confident.		0.69

Table 3

Pro-Roasting Subscale

Choose the answer that best reflects how much you agree or disagree with the following statements and fill in the circle that corresponds to your answer.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly Agree

1. I do NOT enjoy roasting/breaking on my friends.

2. I do NOT enjoy roasting/breaking on people I do not know.

3. I enjoy roasting/breaking on other people.

4. I do NOT enjoy roasting/breaking on other people.

5. I enjoy roasting/breaking on people I do not know.

6. I enjoy roasting/breaking on my friends.

7. I like it when other people roast/break me.

8. I do NOT like it when other people roast/break me.

9. When others roast/break on me, I usually ignore it.

10. I roast/break others to protect myself against others who roast/break me.

11. Being roasted/broken by someone else makes me feel good about myself. For example, I feel self-confident.

12. I try not to do or say things that will make others roast me.

Note. The term "breaking" was used as a synonym for roasting in the actual survey since the sample in this study was most familiar with this term.

aScoring Instructions: Sum the scores on the 12 items after reversing the scoring for each item.

Table 4

Uneasy Subscale

Choose the answer that best reflects how much you agree or disagree with the following statements and fill in the circle that corresponds to your answer.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly Agree

1. When I am around people who are roasting/breaking on each other, it does NOT make me feel nervous or uneasy.

2. When I am around people who are roasting/breaking on each other, it makes me feel nervous or uneasy.

3. Roasting/breaking on someone else makes me feel bad inside. For example, I feel guilty for saying what I said to the other person.

4. Saying "I'm just playing" to someone before or after roasting that person excuses a potentially hurtful joke. That person should not be bothered by what was said.

Note. The term "breaking" was used as a synonym for roasting in the actual survey since the sample in this study was most familiar with this term.
aScoring Instructions: Sum the scores on the 4 items after reversing the scoring for each item.

Table 5

Lowered Self-Confidence Subscale

Choose the answer that best reflects how much you agree or disagree with the following statements and fill in the circle that corresponds to your answer.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly Agree

1. When others roast/break on me about my appearance, it makes me uncomfortable.

2. When others roast/break on me about my appearance, it does NOT make me uncomfortable.

3. Being roasted/broken by someone else makes me feel bad about myself. For example, I feel less self-confident.

Note. The term "breaking" was used as a synonym for roasting in the actual survey since the sample in this study was most familiar with this term.
aScoring Instructions: Sum the scores on the 3 items after reversing the scoring for item 2.

Table 6

Correlations between Roasting factors, Illinois Bully, Fight, and Victimization scales, School Sense of Belonging scale, Depression scale, and Ethnic Identity scale

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Pro-Roasting	1	-.40**	-.58**	.46**	-0.40	.48**	-.17*	0.10	-0.12
2. Uneasy		1	.48**	-0.09	.26**	-0.04	0.07	0.12	0.15
3. Lowered Self-Confidence			1	-.38**	0.13	-.41**	0.09	0.03	0.10
4. Bully Perpetration				1	.20*	.49**	-0.11	.21*	0.00
5. Bully Victimization					1	0.17	-0.09	.40**	-0.03
6. Fighting						1	-0.06	.20*	0.11
7. School Sense of Belonging							1	-.24**	.28**
8. Depression								1	-0.02
9. Ethnic Identity									1

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

Table 7

MANOVA Results of RRS Subscales for Race

	df	F	$\eta p2$
Pro-Roasting	3	11.84**	0.22
Uneasy	3	4.91*	0.10
Lowered Self-Confidence	3	0.87	0.02
Error	130		

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

Table 8

MANOVA Results of RRS Subscales for Gender

	df	F	ηp2
Pro-Roasting	1	1.70	0.01
Uneasy	1	3.77	0.03
Lowered Self-Confidence	1	9.04*	0.06
Error	135		

* $p < .05$.

Table 9

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of RRS Subscales for Race

	African American/ Black		Hispanic		White		Multiracial	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Pro-Roasting	2.26	0.58	1.51	0.41	1.66	0.51	1.87	0.53
Uneasy	2.27	0.73	2.64	0.67	2.86	0.83	2.58	0.68
Lowered Self-Conf.	2.41	0.78	2.86	1.03	2.59	1.12	2.33	0.97

Table 10

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of RRS Subscales for Gender

	Female		Male	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pro-Roasting	1.95	0.55	2.08	0.66
Uneasy	2.60	0.79	2.35	0.73
Lowered Self-Conf.	2.69	0.90	2.24	0.85