

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Under pressure

Criticism and comparisons can plague students in pursuit of their own paths

By Amy Malone
THE BATTALION

Chris Peek, a senior history major, never experienced any real pressure from his parents until his freshman year at Texas A&M. Always an excellent student, Peek really didn't need pushing into Mays Business School. His life took a twist, and Peek switched his major from business to history during his freshman year.

His brother Kevin Peek, a senior sociology major, did not do as well academically as his twin brother. He said that he did not feel extreme pressure academically from his family because his parents had always put stock in Chris.

Kevin Peek enjoyed the lack of pressure from his parents and never felt overly compelled to apply much effort. In college he began to be motivated by his interest in sociology. He switched his major from communications to sociology when he became interested in church history.

"I was never jealous of Kevin growing up, and I don't think he was ever jealous of me. Now that we have become so close I just admire him — all the different qualities that God has given him. I just have so much admiration for him," Peek said.

Chris and Kevin were able to avoid jealousy in their relationship partly because their parents didn't compare them to each other.

Pressure is a word commonly known to the college student whether involving parents, peers, teachers or the self. Most everyone desires to please and live up to not only his counterpart's expectations, but his own as well. Pressure is one of those aspects in life that has no neutral ground — it can motivate, discourage and, without a doubt, shape relationships and lives.

Ted Stachowiak, associate director of Student Counseling Services, said parents are often well-meaning with their comparisons, but don't realize the consequences their comments have on their children. He said many times such criticism, rather than having the desired effect, achieves the adverse instead.

"These comments sometimes make it difficult for the child to become motivated," Stachowiak

said. "Other possible consequences are withdrawal or they are so angry that they aren't able to perform as they are expected to."

The Peek twins sought Christian extracurricular activities their junior year in high school. Both men then decided to pursue this avenue as a career.

Their parents could not understand why the men would want to be "unsuccessful." They said their parents do not approve and believe the two are not using their skills to the best of their abilities.

In this case, Stachowiak said, parents should value what each student has to offer and encourage them in that.

While the pressures of family life and similar ambitions made the Peeks who they are today, other students say they just want to make their parents proud and that in itself is pressure enough.

"My parents never pressured us in anything," said Missy Hamilton, a senior nutritional sciences major. "I would say that they were good at encouraging us in whatever way whether it be in school, athletics or other extracurricular activities. I put a lot of pressure on myself, then and now."

Overall pressure to do well and be involved is viewed positively by some.

Growing up in a single-parent home, said

Heather Jones, a junior communications major, means the expectations of extended family became the primary source of guidance.

"My pressure is not only parental pressure but all my extended family takes it upon themselves to be a father figure to me, as well," Jones said. "Everyone has different standards. It's made me who I am today and made me work a lot harder."

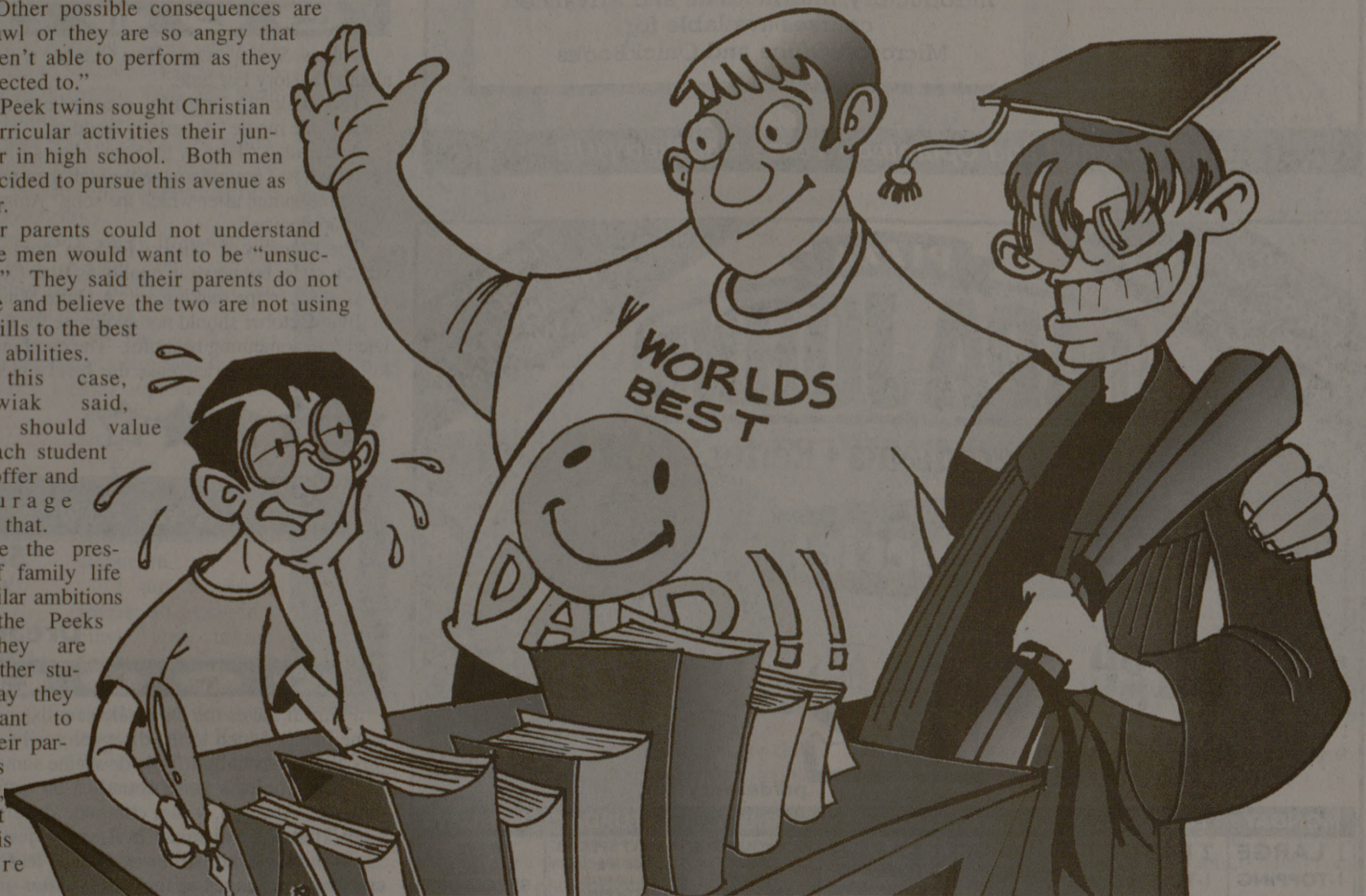
These different standards should be molded to fit

the talents of the student, Stachowiak said.

"A child should be encouraged to seek out their own individualism," Stachowiak said.

Not only does a little positive pressure help build mentor relationships and strengthen existing ties but it gives motivation and structure to life.

"They have taken me under their wing with their expectations," Jones said. "And I do my best to comply with them."



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