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The relationship between height and self-esteem, and the mediating effects of self-consciousness

Booth, Nancy Davis, M.S.
The University of Arizona, 1988
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEIGHT AND SELF-ESTEEM, AND THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

BY

NANCY DAVIS BOOTH

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
SCHOOL OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER RESOURCES
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1988
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her gratitude to her family, Don and Erin, without whose love, support and encouragement this project would not have been possible. Thanks also to Dr. Vic Christopherson for fostering with gentle humor, the biosocial perspective of human behavior, to Dr. Carl Ridley for patiently supplementing and aiding the author's understanding of interpersonal relations, and finally to Dr. R. M. Jones for his generosity in making experimental methods and statistical analyses almost comprehensible.
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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between height and self-esteem, and to examine the mediating effects of self-consciousness. Four hundred and seventy-nine college students, 143 males and 336 females, 75% under the age of 21, were administered The Personal Opinion Survey which consisted of demographic information, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Elkind and Bowen's Imaginary Audience Scale. Findings revealed a nonlinear relationship between height and self-esteem. Further, self-consciousness emerged as a significant mediator of the relationship between height and self-esteem, accounting for the difference in male and female self-esteem scores. Moreover, the influence of self-consciousness on the height and self-esteem relationship was revealed greatest for females.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As the pendulum of the nature-nurture controversy swings back and forth, there is growing recognition that to fully understand human development, it is necessary to draw upon several different theories. Processes relevant to biology, psychology, sociology and historical change are involved with the interaction between the individual and his world.

For Freud, anatomy was destiny. Eric Erikson incorporated Freud's thoughts, but went on to theorize that anatomy was only one part of the individual. Humans, aside from having a physical body, have a personality and are a defined member of a group. "In other words: anatomy, history, and personality are our combined destiny" (Erikson, 1968, p. 285).

Sheldon's (1940) constitutional psychology or somatotyping, no doubt a spinoff of psychoanalytic thinking, postulated that anatomy or body type determined temperament. Somatotyping was a means of estimating the unchanging biological determinants of behavior through measurements based on observable physical characteristics. A person's body has much to do with the way he approaches his environment and the way others respond to him. Subsequent investigations have demonstrated that, while not causing
temperament as Sheldon proposed, body build certainly correlates with temperament. Specific body types elicit specific, predictable responses; and, continuous social interaction appears to enforce and reinforce the way an individual views himself, thus shaping patterns of behavior and self-concept. "At some point, for better or for worse, socially attributed labels are likely to be accepted and once adopted, will lead to psychological commitment that fits them" (McCandless, 1970, p. 473). If expectations influence behavior, then children may become what they are expected to become and the stereotype fosters the very behavior it predicts, the stereotype fostering a self-fulfilling prophecy.

People with atypical physiques regard themselves less favorably, while those with culturally favored somatypes are attributed with such qualities as leadership, intelligence, and greater social skills (Goldman & Lewis, 1977; Adams & Crossman, 1978). In a culture where beauty is the holy grail, it is no wonder that individuals who fail to measure up to the 'standard' are perceived as less desirable, not as smart, less competent, and less talented.

Personality theorists have long argued that physical characteristics have a profound effect on social behavior and perceptions of self. Freud said "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego" (Freud, 1961, p. 26). One's body and face have important effects on the way others respond and
the way one feels about one's self. The concept of one's body is central to the self-concept. Researchers have devoted time to demonstrating the connection between body image and self-concept (Lerner & Karabenick, 1974; Mendelson & White, 1982; Secourd & Jourard, 1953; Stolz & Stolz, 1944;) and have discussed the notion that feelings about the body are commensurate with feelings about the self (Wylie, 1961). Since social feedback shapes the self-concept, the reciprocal influence of body and self-concept is undeniably important and inevitable.

At no time are the effects of these stereotypic attributions more instrumental in forming self-image and more devastating to self-esteem than during adolescence (Mendelson & White, 1982; Noppe, 1983; Schonfeld, 1969;). "What happens during this stage is of the greatest significance for adult personality" (Hall & Lindzey, 1978, p. 91), for during adolescence, the body is perhaps more important than at any time of life. The adolescent must deal with radically changing body proportions, the onset of puberty and all it's impulses, an increase in introspection, the emphasis assigned to certain physical traits by peers, and an increasing tendency to compare oneself with the cultural standards. The desire to conform escalates during adolescence, as peer acceptance becomes the motive for a great deal of behavior. Being different means being inferior, and "anything that tends to make him feel
inadequate or inferior is apt to be met promptly with some kind of defensive reaction" (Schonfeld, 1969, p. 45).

During adolescence, the individual begins to believe that others are evaluating his appearance and behavior. He is always performing for an 'imaginary audience' (Elkind and Bowen, 1979). Mistaking his own preoccupation with himself as universal, the adolescent assumes everyone is as concerned with his performance and appearance as he is. This imaginary audience construct, the feeling that everyone is watching and thinking about them, accounts for the heightened self-consciousness that is characteristic of adolescents (Elkind & Weiner, 1978). Somehow others are communicating their perceptions of his physical characteristics to him and this is related to his own feeling of self-esteem.

Variables of physique such as height, weight, strength, length of limbs and trunk, breadth of skull, and chest and hip circumference have been studied, analyzed, and categorized into various body build types (Parnell, 1954; Rees & Eysenck, 1945; Sheldon, 1940). Based on these body type classifications, research has sought to predict personal and social development depending on somatotype, and more recently, "beauty" or physical attractiveness. These studies have shown that "the evidence for culturally stereotyping of expectations about body type is strong" (McCandless, 1970, p. 151).
Among the aspects of physique, height is particularly important. Our culture values height. In men, tall stature is associated with strength, machismo, independence, and success. Stature is particularly important during adolescence. Boys want to be tall for the obvious advantages of being noticed, being more successful in sports and in social relations with the opposite sex. On the other hand, for girls, being too tall can be a disadvantage and hinder social relations due to self-consciousness, since the cultural norm dictates that women be shorter than men.

The importance of height to one's self-esteem and feelings of attractiveness have not been fully researched. Little is known about the social role of tallness, or how tall people cope with reactions to their size. Most research has focused on the problems of shortness.

The present study is concerned with the relationship between stature and self-esteem. It is hypothesized that individuals that deviate from the norm, in either direction, will have lower self-esteem than those who are within "normal" limits. The relationship between height and self-esteem will be curvilinear. In addition, the relationship of height to self-esteem controlling for self-consciousness (the imaginary audience construct) will be investigated.
Definition of Terms

height or stature: the standing length of the body
weight: the heaviness of the body

general height norms: According to the Nov. 19, 1976 National Center for Health Statistics report *Height and Weight of Adults 18-74 years of age in the United States*, the adult American male averages 5'9", the female, 5'3.6".

general weight norms: Weight gain approximates the same time table as the rate of height gain. Marked weight gains coincide with the onset of puberty. During early adolescence girls tend to outweigh boys, but by age 14, boys begin to surpass girls.

general growth norms: From birth until prepuberty, boys are slightly taller than girls. At age 9 girls start to pull ahead and stay ahead for three years due to their earlier growth spurt. At 13 boys begin to catch up and they continue to grow into their late teens or early twenties. Since their spurt lasts longer, the average full-grown male is taller than the average full-grown female.

body image: the image of the body which is formed in the mind of the way the body and its components appear, and their relations to one another. The self-image or self-concept.
body type: body build, physique, phenotype.

self-esteem: The value one places on himself and the extent to which he anticipates success in what he does.

imaginary audience: Adolescent egocentricism, the failure to differentiate between the cognitive concerns of others and those of self, gives rise to this cognitive structure. Based on the premise that others are as admiring or as critical of us as we are of ourself, the adolescent is continually constructing or reacting to an imaginary audience.

self-consciousness: uncertainty associated with the awareness of one's personal style or appearance not being equal to social expectations or one's own mental image of oneself.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to social attributions according to body type, the self-perception of certain physical attributes and the effects of adolescent egocentrism on body image. The first section considers several studies on body build type, the physical attractiveness stereotype and the variables accounting for differences in perceived attractiveness, especially in relation to height. The following section will examine literature related to height, self-perception and the attributions of personality characteristics as they influence human relations and social interaction. The final section deals with adolescent egocentrism, the imaginary audience concept, and the development of body image.

Body Type, Physical Attractiveness and Social Attribution

Literature as ancient as the writings of Aristotle and Hippocrates is full of popular notions that people of certain physical types exhibit certain personality types. In Shakespeare's Love's Labours Lost, the relationship between physique and intelligence is expressed: "Fat paunches have lean pates, and dainty bits make rich the ribs but bankrupt quite the wits" (Shakespeare, 1970, p. 57,
The long-lived stereotype of the jolly fat lady gives testament to the association between personality and body type.

Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.) attributed certain physical types with characteristic temperamental dispositions and susceptibility to different diseases. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the founder of physiognomy, attempting to relate an individual's mental and moral qualities to external physical features, stated that the mental character is conditioned by the state of the body. Only a few writers and physicians carried on the study of physiognomy, and by the late 18th century, these studies were redirected by the work of those in the now discredited field of phrenology and later by Lombroso (1918) who founded the study of criminal anthropology, theorizing that individuals were predisposed to crime through physical abnormalities, particularly cranial anomalies.

Modern interest in the relationship between physique, temperament and personality was stimulated by the work of Kretschmer (1936) who, using certain physical measurements, described personality types found in psychotic patients. His controversial hypothesis regarding the relation of body types to temperament and mental illness stated that if long, lean people became mentally ill they were likely to become schizophrenic while short, stocky individuals were likely to become manic-depressive. By pursuing the relationship
between physical types and certain psychotic illnesses, he stimulated an enormous amount of research in constitutional psychology.

The field of constitutional research was restricted by the fact the variations in the population were not known and the various typologies were simply unproven hypotheses. The introduction of factor analysis made it possible to find out, with known certainty, the nature of variations of physique in the normal population and describing it. "The factor analysis of persons proved a method of determining how true an individual is to a particular type in question by a set of representative measurements expressed in standard measure. The correlation between the person's measurements and those of a standard pattern indicates how nearly he approximates a perfect representative of that type" (Rees, 1968, p. 67).

Sheldon (1940) classified physiques into endomorphic (large, short and fat,) said to be outgoing, jovial, gregarious and sociable; mesomorphic (athletic body,) thought to be callous, noisy, assertive and vigorous; and, the ectomorphic (tall and thin) who are supposedly restrained, inhibited, neurotic and shy. In his group of 200 university men, he found high positive correlations between components of physique and components of temperament. Prior to Sheldon's work, investigations of the body - personality relationships had been problematically
regarded physical typologies as mutually exclusive
categories, while Sheldon's types described "physique as a
continuous variation in three components of body build"
(Rees, 1961, p. 357). Sheldon's methodology was criticized
because of its subjectivity, and evidence indicated,
contrary to Sheldon's claim, that changes in a person's
somatotype did not remain constant but fluctuated with diet and
increasing age. While Sheldon believed that physique
determined temperament, more current research (e.g., Adams,
1975; 1977; Adams & Crossman, 1978; Lerner & Karabenick,
suggests that a person's body has much to do with the way he
engages his environment and the way others respond to him.
Because of this socio-psychological interaction, researchers
agreed that body build shares an important relationship to
temperament, but it does not cause temperament (McCandless

Modifying Sheldon's method, Lindegarde (1953) used
measurements of length, sturdiness, muscle, and fat to
estimate somatotype. He found that these four factors
explained the variations in body build. "The weakness of
Lindegard's system is . . . the possibility that they
(somatotypes) might be altered within a short space of time by
training and exercise and are influenced by age, disease,
etc" (Rees, 1968, p. 69).
The Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

Contemporary investigations have concluded that "stereotyping leads to the internalization of the stereotyped personality image by the target person" (Adams, 1978). Stohl (1981) cites similar findings. General social psychological research offers data that supports a relationship between expectations of others and corresponding behaviors by the target person (e.g. Aronson & Carlsmith, 1962; Dailey, 1952; Zajonc & Brickman, 1969).

In related studies, teachers and parents consistently expressed expectations congruent with the physical attractiveness phenomena - i.e., that more positive behavior was expected from the children with higher levels of physical attractiveness (Adams & Cohen, 1976; Adams & Crane, 1980). For example, reviews of physical stereotype studies generally conclude that less attractive children get fewer advantages in the classroom, while their more attractive classmates are perceived by teachers as more likely to succeed academically and socially, and are therefore given more teacher attention (e.g., LaVoie & Adams, 1974). Obviously physical stereotypes exist and manifest themselves as early as the preschool level, and if teachers' expect different behavior from students of different physical attractiveness, the students sense these messages, process the subtle cues, and develop accordingly to conform to the expectations, perhaps resulting in self-fulfilling

Research has found attractive individuals to possess a larger range of favorable personality traits, attributing acquisition to their greater experience with positive social reactions (Adams 1975; Adams & Crossman, 1978; Barocas & Karoly, 1972; Staffieri, 1972). An investigation of the reality of the physical attractiveness stereotype revealed that beauty is associated with goodness (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972; Goldman & Lewis, 1977; Miller, 1970), and that physically attractive people, being perceived in more favorable terms, elicit more positive interaction. The work of Adams (1977), Adams & Crossman (1978), Adams & Read (1983), Lerner & Karabenick (1974), Lerner, Karabenick & Stuart (1973), and Snyder, Tanke & Berscheid (1977) support the assertion that individuals actually internalize attributes and behaviors of the physical attractiveness stereotype.

Body type has been shown to be a factor in attractiveness. Studies show that American males and females view the mesomorphic structure as more desirable (Dwyer & Mayer, 1969; Lerner 1969a; b; Staffieri, 1972). Studies with preschoolers (Walker, 1962), elementary school age children (Staffieri, 1967), and college age men
(Brodsky, 1954) found certain body builds to be related to perceived social characteristics, with the mesomorph (tall and muscular) body type preferable to others. Endomorphs (barrel-bellied, large torsoed) were viewed as socially offensive, and ectomorphs (tall and/or thin) seen in much the same light. Jones and Bayley (1950) found that early maturing boys with mesomorphic physiques were seen as most attractive to adults and peers, and were more often treated and accepted as mature adults.

In general, the findings indicate that girls follow the same tendency as boys, but the stereotype is even more pronounced (Hassan, 1967; Krebs & Adinolfi 1975; Miller, 1970). These studies suggest that the relationship between physical attractiveness and certain personality traits may reflect a person's actual personality due to differential expectations and social behaviors. Physically attractive people date more often (Spreadbury & Reeves, 1979), have more friends and happier marriages (Kirkpatrick & Cotton, 1951), experience less social anxiety (Adams, 1977), possess and exhibit greater individuality (Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975), and are better adjusted socially (Lerner & Lerner, 1977).

Variations in Perceived Attractiveness

Facial attractiveness and body characteristics have been defined as important variables in accounting for the
differences in perceived physical attractiveness. Height "may account for a fair portion of attractiveness variance, particularly in men" (Berscheid & Walster, 1974, p. 178).

In ranking certain physical characteristics important for determining physical attractiveness, men ranked height as sixth most important, behind face, legs, weight, torso, and voice/hair, while women ranked height third, behind weight and face (Mahoney & Finch, 1976).

Adams (1975) was able to draw some general conclusions regarding physical attractiveness. Physically attractive people have better self-concepts and have stronger beliefs about their ability to control their own destiny. In addition, "culturally valued physical attributes are likely to be related to positive self-concepts which attenuate peer pressure to conform" (Adams, 1975, p. 122). People who possess body types that are less culturally valued (endomorphic and ectomorphic) are more influenced by peers and also exhibit lower self-acceptance than those with culturally valued mesomorphic physiques.

The relationship between external physical attractiveness and the self-concept has been empirically documented in adolescents (Lerner et al., 1974; Lerner Vennig & Knapp, 1975), in college students (Adams, 1975; Lerner et al., 1973; Lerner, Orlos & Knapp, 1976), and in adults (Berscheid et al., 1973). Females higher in physical attractiveness were found to be more understanding, more
acheivement oriented, and more independent. Males higher in physical attractiveness were more aggressive and dominating (Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975). While a personality profile may be emerging, the causal elements are as yet unidentified.

Further analyses demonstrated that certain physical attributes are related to instrumentally ineffective personality characteristics. Tall, thin males as well as females exhibit a certain personality profile which includes external locus of control, with a strong belief in powerful others and chance, high emotionality (for thin males), strong social anxiety and distress, lower self-perceptions of likeability, and lower self-acceptance, in short, a self-constraining personality. Additionally however, if a female is tall and heavy, she is self-confident, emotionally controlled, sensation seeking and assertive (Adams, 1975). Admittedly, the findings are unclear and difficult to interpret.

These data provide support for the assertion that unattractive persons may tend to internalize unfavorable personality characteristics, and that body type is the principal physical characteristic associated with negative personality characteristics for late adolescents. Thinness in males and tallness in females is "related to self-consciousness due to the discrepant body image one would have in relationship to the average peer. Therefore, such self-consciousness might lead one to internalize a self-
constraining social pattern" (Adams, 1975, p. 138).

Overall, research demonstrates that children are all too aware of their own body builds and of those they prefer, with girls being even more pronounced in these stereotypes. The evidence for cultural stereotyping of expectations regarding body type is strong, with positive and negative personality traits systematically enforced and re-enforced through daily interaction, exchanges and social feedback. Physical attractiveness plays a dramatic, but covert role in interpersonal interactions and each life is shaped by the potential and limits it perceives its body as having. An unfavorable body image can undermine feelings toward the self, while a favorable body image is the foundation for confidence, productivity and self-esteem.

**Height as a Mediator of Self-Perception**

If our personal style is a product of our body image, part of that style certainly has to be affected by our physical size. But size is only relative to another contrasting body. Perhaps one's height, relative to another's at any early, impressionable time of life influences our adult style more than the height we ultimately achieve.

It is sex-appropriate in our culture for men to be big and tall, but for women, "being tall may be a genuine emotional hazard" (Stolz & Stolz, 1944). For females,
tallness may hinder social relations with boys, especially during the early teens when boys tend to be shorter than girls (Dwyer & Mayer, 1969; Frazier & Lisonbee, 1950). As discussed earlier, extreme height for females is related to heightened self-consciousness due to discrepant body image in relation to the average peer (Adams, 1978). Since girls begin to mature an average of two years earlier than boys, tallness can be an even greater liability. Not only is the tall girl taller during the two years it takes boys to catch up, but she remains consistently taller throughout adolescence (Tanner, 1970). Taller girls who look older are nonverbally pressured to act older and more mature (Brackbill & Neville, 1980). Just when every teen wants most to fit in, the tall girl's body betrays her.

The male youth who begins to mature early is typically taller than his peers, usually given more authority, and is called upon more often than their shorter peers to be a leader. Physical characteristics stimulate different attributions of personality traits. Implicit personality theory states that when you perceive one characteristic in a person, you attribute others to them as well (Bruner & Tagiuri, 1954). In this way a person who is perceived as attractive can be extremely persuasive and can stimulate others to be more cooperative, friendly and self-disclosing (Mills & Aronson, 1965). Taller men are attributed with acknowledgement, deference, power and leadership abilities.
The "bigger is better" stereotype gives a tall man the psychological edge.

Size is associated with value and tallness correlates with power. In fact, size is commonly used as a visual shorthand for authority. "So thoroughly is it assumed that differences in size will correlate with differences in social weight that relative size can be routinely used as a means of ensuring that the picture's story will be understandable at a glance" (Goffman, 1976, p.87). The smaller figure will be the subordinate, the larger the dominant. For instance, when a cartoonist wants to suggest a henpecked husband, the shorthand is to make the husband smaller than the wife. Lower self-esteem due to heightened self-consciousness could lead an individual to be more of a follower, and more likely to conform.

The few pieces of research investigating the relationship of height to self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Frazier, 1950; Lerner et al., 1973; Prieto & Robbins, 1975) have concluded that actual height does not seem to be a significant predictor of self-esteem, that a person's actual physique is not related to self-concept, but that physical characteristics as perceived by others had more to do with their evaluations of themselves than the subjects' own sense of their height. "This suggests that others may somehow be communicating their perceptions of a person's physical characteristics to him and this in turn is related to his
feelings of self-esteem" (Prieto & Robbins, 1975, p. 397).

The Prieto et al. (1975) study used multiple regression analysis, a statistic used for linear relationships, and concluded that there was no relationship between actual height and self-esteem. Gunderson (1964) found a curvilinear relationship between actual height and satisfaction with height, indicating dissatisfaction with height whenever there was deviation from the generally preferred height of 72 inches. Perhaps by using a measure of association appropriate for curvilinear relationships, an association could be found between actual height and self-esteem which might parallel the curvilinear relationship between actual height and satisfaction with height, since dissatisfaction with height could lead to lower self-esteem.

The relationship between height and political success cannot be neglected. "It is not by chance that every American president elected since 1900 has been the taller of the two major candidates" (Feldman, 1971, p. 2). Since 1971 there has only been the single exception of Jimmy Carter's victory over Gerald Ford. Pains were taken to insure that Carter was never seen by the voters as shorter than Ford. The presidential debates were carefully orchestrated so that the candidates were seated, or the lecturns were far enough apart to minimize direct height comparisons. Interestingly, even though the average height for men is 5'9" in 1978, the average height of US Senators was 6'0.33." There is clearly
a relationship between height and political election outcomes.

Even the business world is affected by an individual's height. Stature has been shown to correlate "with employment decisions both at the time of application and later in compensation (Patzer, 1985, p. 163). In a sample of sales managers, 72% would have hired the taller of two equally qualified applicants (Kurtz, 1969). In Deck's (1968) survey of starting salaries of Pittsburg graduates, he found salary benefits for taller employees. On the average, there was a $1,000-a-year penalty for being under 6'2". Those under 6' averaged $701 a month starting, those 6'2" and over started at $788 a month. That yields a salary bonus of 12.4%. (The bonus for being cum laude was only 4.2%). The employer may have a definite height preference and assume that the taller salesperson will sell more, but no significant difference in sales associated with height has been shown (Keyes, 1980).

The generic perception literature documents that one's perception of an object can be altered through subjective factors such as the value and power we endow certain items with. For instance, the size of a coin is estimated to be larger than the same-size nonmonetary disc (Bruner & Goodman, 1947), or the size of cards are overestimated in relation to the monetary values given to each (Dukes & Bevan, 1952). These same perceptual distortions pertain to
the heights of people, with taller individuals perceived as more powerful, possessing greater value and authority.

In Gunderson's 1965 study of Navy men aged 17 to 21 years, he found that height had a pervasive effect on self-evaluations. "Many young adult males apparently find small body size a threat to self-esteem and tend to depreciate their own personal worth based on this perception. (Gunderson, 1965, p. 906). The more an individual deviated from the height of 72 inches or the weight of 151-180 pounds the more likely he was to report dissatisfaction with his body.

Attitudes and Attributions of Stature

Taller people receive more positive attributions and perceptions of height can be influenced by nonheight factors. Tall men are perceived as being confident and dominant. They are more often recipients of women's admiration, are more easily in control, better able to make entree into conversations and have an easier time being hired. They look the part and fulfill the image. There is a subconscious envy at his greater size, perhaps a throwback to when a huge size made him master.

In one interesting study, a man was introduced to five groups of students as everything from a visiting student (low rank) to a distinguished professor from England (high rank). When the students were asked to measure the man's
height, their average estimate went up with the rank they thought him to be (Wilson, 1968). Nursing students consistently over-estimated heights of people introduced to their class as "administrators" and consistently underestimated those presented as "fellow students" (Dannermaier & Thumin, 1964). Both Shaffer (1964) and Wilson's (1968) studies lend support for the relationship between the estimated heights of others and their own perceived importance. Adults and adolescents who are highly esteemed for their accomplishments are perceived to be taller than they really are (Brackbill & Neville, 1980).

Koulack & Tuthill (1972) found that individuals who rated highly on social acceptability, were perceived as taller that individuals rated lower (the American was perceived as tallest, the Indian next, and the Hutterite as shortest). These findings are consistent with Dannenmaier and Thumin (1964) and Wilson (1968) who found that the status of an individual influences his perceived height.

Keyes (1980) offers this explanation as to why power and leadership qualities are attributed to tall individuals:

Isn't the main reason tall people are chosen so regularly for leadership positions that we raise our eyes to theirs as we once did to our parents' – with a similar feeling that this is a person who can take care of us? And don't we assume that bigger people are stronger people less because of their extra muscle mass
than because our latent infant's eye concludes that whatever it looks up to is powerful - as our parents once were, looking down on our crib. (p. 283)

In his survey of attitudes regarding height, Keyes (1980) found it was rare for anyone to be happy with their own height. Overwhelmingly people wanted to be taller.

Height is valued by females. When third grade girls chose among otherwise identical silhouettes, the one they would most like to resemble, 64% chose the tallest, 8% the smallest (Kagan, 1964). These studies show that women value height. And once past adolescence, pride is what most tall women feel regarding their size (Jones & Mussen, 1958).

Tall is equal to glamour, sophistication, being remembered. Tall also means being more independent, less likely to marry, and more likely to migrate from a home setting (Thompson, 1959). Tall women are caught in a chink in American values that says "big is better" but which associates traditional feminity with daintiness.

Shorter women have the problem of being infantilized, being perceived as fragile, delicate, and childlike. The overall effect produces feelings of being insignificant and childish. Lack of size implies lack of clout (Keyes, 1980).

Stature and Interpersonal Relations

Since most men are taller than most women, height assumes an important role in dating. There is a taboo
against men dating taller women. In their 1966 study of
dating attractiveness, Walster, Aronson, Abrams & Rottman,
(1966), assigned university freshmen dates by computer on a
random basis, except whenever a taller woman was randomly
assigned to a shorter man, in which case her card was
deliberately suffled back into the deck. Obviously the
taller woman – shorter man taboo is too big to buck.

The desire to be taller than a woman seems to be
related to a need for dominance. Beigel (1954) found that
3/4 of men interviewed who wanted a greater than average
difference in height between themselves and a woman, also
expressed a greater than average desire to feel dominant
over her. Women who wished for a greater height difference
between themselves and their man also expressed a desire to
be submissive to their husbands. Women who wanted less of a
height difference tended to be frustrated by the traditional
woman's role. In a similar study, college men who expressed
the strongest belief in male superiority over women, also
expressed the greatest overall desire for a taller body
(Fisher, 1964). Power aspirations could be expressed in
terms of one's size, especially being superior to women.
What is at issue here is not relative size so much as
relative power.

Height can even dictate our choice of friends. In his
study of friendship choice among college students, Berkowitz
(1969) found that in 514 pairs of friends there was an
average difference of 2.76", a smaller difference than would have occurred in a random pairing of the same subjects. Like heights tend to cluster. Apparently being with others of similar height enhances one's feelings about oneself, while being with others of a different height causes self-doubt (Portnoy, 1972).

Yet, in another study (Graziano, Brother & Berscheid, 1978), smaller men were best liked by other men of all heights. For strength and leadership, most men agreed the taller the better, but for friendship, "short men were liked more and rated more positively than tall men" (Graziano, et al., 1978, p. 144). Perhaps they were perceived as less threatening as friends.

Height, having a pervasive influence on eliciting the attribution of all sorts of personality qualities, affects such tangible areas as income, choice of mate and friends, personal style, and the self-concept. As John Kenneth Galbraith commented, "one of society's most blatant and forgiven prejudices is the bias in favor of height" (Unger, 1977). Individuals that wish to be a different stature are in actuality desirous of the qualities associated with that stature. The height bias plus the positive relationship with physical attractiveness leads to the stereotypic attribution that to be tall is to be good (Feldman, 1971).
Adolescent Egocentrism and Body Image

A sex-appropriate appearance is of paramount importance during adolescence. Becoming more conscious of "self" and more introspective, the adolescent strives to become the ideal, to fit into the world around him, and to deal with accelerated body changes. Cognitively, the adolescent is more able to decentralize, so that the opinions and evaluations of significant others and peers take on new import. Egocentrism gradually diminishes during this period as the adolescent heads toward assuming an adult role. The maturation of the brain and body which occurs at puberty make new intellectual achievements possible. Adolescents begin to be able to think more logically and imaginatively, and to see the hypothetical and the possible (Piaget, 1972). Even though they no longer believe that the universe revolves around them, a new form of egocentrism comes into play: a preoccupation with self and a new capacity to take into account the thoughts of others. In imagining the thoughts of others, adolescents may fail to recognize the difference between what is important to others and what is of concern only to them. Unable to separate their thoughts from those of others, the young adolescent may believe others are as preoccupied with their concerns as they. Elkind (1967) contends that adolescents are continually constructing and reacting to an "imaginary audience." The young adolescent fantasizes he is on stage playing before
interested onlookers who are constantly scrutinizing - either admiringly or critically - his appearance and behavior. The imaginary audience "probably plays a role in the self-consciousness which is so characteristic of early adolescents. When the young person is feeling critical of himself, he anticipates that the audience . . . will be critical too" (Elkind, 1967, p. 1030). Deepening introspection and need for privacy may be a reaction to the feeling he is being critically scrutinized. The characteristics of the adolescent's body are important to what they do, how they view themselves, how they develop, and should be viewed in light of this egocentrism. As the adolescent grows toward young adulthood, experiencing a variety of social interactions, he establishes the cognitive capacity to realistically differentiate between his own preoccupations and the interests and concerns of others. The imaginary audience has served to test reality in social situations, and, after a variety of social interactions, adolescents gradually establish the cognitive capacity to realistically differentiate between their own preoccupations and the interests and concerns of others. When this task is accomplished, the adolescent can abandon the imaginary audience and establish true interpersonal relations (Elkind, 1967).

Many children differ from the norm because of the timing or the rate of their physical maturation. Through
association with other children and culture in general, a child knows and becomes highly conscious of the similarities and differences in appearance and performance. "With the accentuation which adolescents bring to the need for social acceptance by peers, the wanting to be liked and not wanting to be different tends to modify persistently both outward behavior and attitudes toward self" (Stolz & Stolz, 1944, p. 81). Past and present experience of the body precipitates cognition about the body. This becomes the body-concept. "The rapid changes of adolescence require a revision of body-image at the very time when youth is in the midst of emotional turmoil, so that even the normal adolescent often feels his body to be strange to him and is overly concerned about how he compares with his or her companions" (Schonfeld, 1969, p. 43).

Since growth during adolescence tends to be discordant, the physical changes associated with sexual development do not always occur at the same time. Differences in the timing or the rate of physical maturation can cause disturbances in the body image. Late-maturing boys are more likely than early-maturing boys to be greeted with an unfavorable sociopsychological environment which could have negative effects on personality development. Physically accelerated boys will probably experience an environment more conducive to good psychological adjustment (Jones & Bayley, 1950). Looking at the early adult adjustments of
the adolescent boys studied, Jones (1957) found that "the adolescent handicaps and advantages associated with late- or early-maturing boys appear to carry over into adulthood to some extent, and perhaps to a greater extent in psychological than in physical characteristics" (p. 128). By this age (33 years), it should be noted, that physical differences between the two groups had practically disappeared. Yet children that were excessively tall or heavy during adolescence may still perceive themselves as gigantic even as an average-sized adult.

Lerner, et al. (1976) found that satisfaction with the body was a predictor of self-concept. Lerner et al. (1974) and Simmons & Rosenberg (1975) reported it even more so for females. Low self-esteem is related to high self-consciousness. Teen-aged girls are more self-conscious or sensitive to an imaginary audience than males (Adams & Jones, 1981; Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Enright, Shukla & Lapsley, 1980; Goossens, 1984; Gray & Hudson, 1984; Hauck, Martens & Wetzel, 1986; Mullis & Markstrom, 1986; Pesce & Harding, 1986; Richter, Reaves, Deaver & Lacy, 1982; Riley, Adams & Nielson, 1984; Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975; Simons, Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1973). This is a reasonable finding considering girls' earlier maturation and differential socialization.

This is also in accordance with Erikson's (1968) concept of inner space for females and outer space for
males, placing emphasis on the adolescent's physical characteristics as the source of identity and self-concept. The female's reproductive inner space and the male's outer, serve as criterion for basic schema and sexual differentiation. It is biologically appropriate for the female to take in or incorporate the male, and while, literally or symbolically, she should view her body as a basis for attracting and incorporating others, and her body's usefulness in terms of interpersonal physical attractiveness. The male's biological imperative is to intrude into the environment, and so should view his body as an instrument for manifesting his own physical effectiveness (Lerner, et al., 1976). Through experience, perceptions, comparisons and identification with others, whether real or fantasy, the ideal body-image is formed. Since the body-image is strongly related to self-esteem (Berscheid, Walster & Bohrnstedt, 1973; Lerner, et al., 1973; Mendelson & White, 1982; Secourd et al., 1953), it is unfortunate that our culture contributes to the adolescent's confusion by overemphasizing unrealistic standards and glorifying the ideal body, degrading any who fall short.

Of all the physical differences that cause disturbances and problems in adolescent adjustment, the foremost is physical stature. Most adolescents are distinctly aware of their size and how much they vary from the norm. In Stolz's et al. (1944) study of somatic variations, the primary
causes of disturbance were height (lack of height for males, being too tall for females) and fatness. Concern in the Frazier et al. (1950) study "centered rather dramatically in tallness for girls (49% of the girls who thought of themselves as tall expressed concern) and in shortness for boys (39% concern)" (p. 399).

Erikson's (1950) words on acknowledging the child in each of us serves as a warning to society of the need to overcome our childhood lest we endanger our maturity:

Every adult, whether he is a follower or a leader, a member of a mass or of an elite, was once a child. He was once small. A sense of smallness forms a substratum in his mind, ineradicably. His triumphs will be measured against this smallness, his defeats will substantiate it. The questions as to who is bigger and who can do or not do this or that, and to whom – these questions fill the adult's inner life far beyond the necessities and the desirabilities which he understands and for which he plans. (p. 404)

As babies we make the accurate association between size and power, and this early association is one of the most lasting, persisting as a latent anxiety long after the association is invalid. Children receive numerous reinforcing examples of the role of size in determining status and value through books, television, movies, music, actual experiences – in short, through our culture.
Summary

Reviewing the research related to social attributions according to body type and physical attractiveness, it has been found that the body has much to do with the way one engages the environment and the perception of others. The type of body build one has is an important factor in attractiveness, for both sexes, with the mesomorphic body type more culturally favored. Individuals perceived as attractive have more favorable personality traits and expect greater positive social exchanges, internalize attributes and behaviors of the physical attractiveness stereotype, have better self-esteem, and are less likely to conform. Those with less favorable body types internalize unfavorable personality characteristics and are more influenced by their peers to conform.

Physical attributes as perceived by others have been shown to have more to do with a person's self-esteem than the actual characteristic. The more an individual deviates from the norm, the higher the dissatisfaction. Of factors contributing to physical attractiveness, height and size take the lion's share in importance. Stature affects the choice of friends, future success, while the tall woman—shorter man taboo influences dating and selection of marriage partner.

Being desirous of the qualities associated with stature (leadership, dominance, power, and authority) the adolescent
is overly conscious of a sex-appropriate body type. The adolescent must revise his body image at a time when his body is changing rapidly and is strange to him. Overly concerned about how he compares to his peers, and failing to differentiate between what is important to others and what is important only to him, the adolescent invents an imaginary audience, before whom he is on stage playing. This interested, critical audience probably plays a role in the self-consciousness so characteristic of early adolescents. The way the adolescent looks, his body image, and his self-concept should be viewed in light of this egocentricism.

In all, satisfaction with the body is a predictor of the self-concept and stature is one of the most important physical factors in adolescent adjustment. If self-esteem is affected by the self-concept, then it would be most interesting to seek out the strength of the relationship of stature to self-esteem.

The purpose of this study is:

1. to measure the degree of association between height and self-esteem.

2. to measure the degree to which the imaginary audience construct mediates the relationship between height and self-esteem.

3. to examine the interaction of imaginary audience, height, and gender, with regard to the height-
self-esteem-imaginary audience association.
The review of literature has led to the following hypothesis:

1. There will be a curvilinear relationship between height and self-esteem.

Assuming there is a relationship between height and self-esteem, additional analyses will focus on examining the mediating effects of the imaginary audience construct on this relationship, and whether it is similar for males and females.
CHAPTER 3

Methods

The following methods were implemented to examine the relationship between height and self-esteem, and the mediating effect of self-consciousness.

Measurement

All subjects were administered a paper and pencil instrument, The Personal Opinion Survey (cf. Appendix A), which consisted of 39 items: (a) self-descriptive variables including age, sex, year in school, height, weight, height and weight of spouse or significant other, height of biological parents, self-perceived attractiveness, satisfaction with own height, and height acceptability by peers, family and teachers; (b) Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, (10 items); and (c) Elkind and Bowen's (1979) Imaginary Audience Scale (IAS), (12 items).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSE) consists of ten items that measure self-regard and has been used extensively in adolescent self-concept research. The RSE has been shown to be psychometrically appropriate. Estimates of internal consistency have been reported as follows: Rosenberg (1965), CR=.92 (high-school students); test-retest correlations of r=.85 among college students (Sibler & Tippett, 1965; two-week interval), and proven
acceptable in validation efforts (Rosenberg, 1965; Sibler & Tippet, 1965; Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975, Wylie, 1974; 1979). The items are designed to assess the extent to which students feel positive or negative about themselves. High scores on this instrument indicate high self-esteem, while low scores indicate low self-esteem.

The Imaginary Audience Scale (IAS) is made up of two 6-item subscales. The Transient Self (TS) assesses reactions to six embarrassing situations which are temporary in nature. The Abiding Self (AS) measures reactions to situations that have more stable, enduring qualities. Subjects respond to a 3-point scale by checking the response with which they agree. The scoring involves 2 points if a subject reacts to the questions with an unwillingness to participate, 1 point if a neutral position is taken and 0 points if the subject indicates a willingness to participate. Therefore, the lower the score, the lower the self-consciousness. High scores indicate an unwillingness to be open about themselves, and thus signify a strong awareness of an imaginary audience.

Reliability data from subsequent studies (Adams & Jones, 1981; Goossens, 1984; Gray & Hudson, 1984; Richter et al., 1982; Riley et al., 1984) are comparable to those of Elkind and Bowen (1979), in which test-retest reliability correlations of r=.65 were found.

The data on construct validity of this measure are
unclear (Gray & Hudson, 1984). Psychometric and theoretical inconsistencies prompt questions as to IAS validity because "it lacks parallelism between AS items (feeling oriented) and TS items (action oriented), and it is constructed with a transient versus abiding dimension whereas Elkind (1967) hypothesized the imaginary audience construct with an objective-subjective dimension" (Johnson, 1988, p. 7). Elkind (1967) describes the audience as "imaginary" because the adolescent concerned is not the focus, yet Lechner & Rosenthal (1984) noted that in six of the twelve items, the subject is the focus. Adams & Jones (1981) warn against performing data analysis on the individual subscales of the IAS. "Nonetheless, the Imaginary Audience Behavior Scale appears to be an initial instrument worthy of consideration in the study of self-consciousness" (Adams, & Jones, 1981, p. 9).

**Procedures**

All subjects were solicited for participation during their regular class period and participation was voluntary. Subjects were told they would be participating in a study examining physical attributes and self-opinions. Benefits to the students for participating in the study were explained and anonymity was assured. General instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaire, and the necessity to complete all items. Also explained was the
assumption that by completing the questionnaire, consent had been given.

**Data Analyses**

Prior to addressing the research questions, a series of evaluations were conducted to establish the psychometric appropriateness of using these selected scales (Rosenberg's Self-Esteem and Elkind and Bowen's Imaginary Audience) for addressing the research questions of this study.

Specifically Cronbach's coefficient alpha was generated for (1) The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, (2) The Transient subscale of the Imaginary Audience Scale, (3) The Abiding subscale of the Imaginary Audience Scale, and (4) the whole Imaginary Audience Scale (IAS).

**Hypothesis 1**: There will be a curvilinear relationship between height and self-esteem, being more pronounced for females.

To test this hypothesis, two separate correlation analyses were calculated: Pearson's product-moment correlation and eta. Both are measures of association, with the former suitable for linear relationships and the later for nonlinear. If eta exceeds Pearson r then we can assume the relationship to be curvilinear, thus adding support for Hypothesis 1. Conversely, if Pearson r exceeds eta, then we can assume the relationship is linear, therefore indicating
that Hypothesis 1 should be rejected.

To find out if there are gender differences in the height-self-esteem relationship, analysis of variance was used, with the height group serving as the independent variable and self-esteem as the dependent variable.

To examine the remaining research question of whether the imaginary audience construct was mediating the relationship between height and self-esteem, three subgroups based on height were created for both males and females. Average height was calculated for each. Respondents scoring lower than average constituted one group, those of average height the second group, and those above average made up the third group. The hypothesis was tested using analysis of covariance, where self-esteem constituted the dependent variable, and gender and height groupings constituted two independent variables, height having three levels and gender two. IAS scores were used as a covariant in the analyses. These analyses were conducted for males and females separately.
CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter describes the sample and summarizes the results of statistical procedures utilized to address the hypothesis and research questions in this study. Reliability and validity of the measures is also examined.

Sample Description

The convenience sample of university students consisted of 143 males and 336 females. Thirty-eight percent were freshmen and sophomores and 95% were single. Subjects were taken from undergraduate courses in child development, family relations, economics, music and sociology, and included 74 freshmen, 107 sophomores, 169 juniors, and 121 seniors. Sixty percent of respondents reported coming from a "tall" family, 20% from families of average height, and 18% from shorter families. Results of subjects rating themselves on a one to ten attractiveness scale found that 50% of students placed themselves at 6 or below. Average height of male subjects was between 5'10" and 5'11", slightly taller than the national average of 5'9", while the average height of female subjects was between 5'3" and 5'4", consistent with the national average. Seventy-five percent of subjects were 21 years or younger.
Preliminary Analyses

A series of psychometric analyses were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of selected measures for purposes of addressing the hypothesis and research questions in this study. Specifically, internal consistency [i.e., Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficients] and interscale relations (Pearson correlation coefficients) were examined prior to addressing the research questions. Results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Alpha Coefficients and Interscale Correlations for the Self-esteem (SE), Transient Self (TS), Abiding Self (AS), and Imaginary Audience (IAS) Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SE</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>-.49</td>
<td>-.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. TS</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.51)</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. AS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.68)</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. IAS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Diagonal elements are Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients, off-diagonal are Pearson product-moment correlations.

As shown in Table 1, the alpha coefficient for the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSE) was .85, approximate to previous estimates of internal consistency for this measure.

An alpha coefficient of .51 was obtained for the Transient Self Scale (TS), consistent with Elkind and Bowen's (1979) findings, and slightly larger than the .49 that was reported by Adams and Jones (1981). Alpha for the Abiding Self Scale (AS) was .68, equivalent to Adams and Jones (.69), and slightly higher than Elkind and Bowen (.61). An internal consistency estimate of .70 was found for the Imaginary Audience Scale (IAS). This is much higher than the alpha of .44 reported by Elkind and Bowen (1979) or .63 reported by Adams and Jones (1981). The higher interscale consistency (alpha) for the IAS found in this study may be due to the older sample. (Elkind and Bowen studied 4th - 12th graders, Adams and Jones 11 - 18 year olds.)

The inter-scale correlations exhibited consistency in measuring the same construct: Pearson's r=.84 for both TS and AS Scales, indicating that both scales converge on a similar construct (imaginary audience). The SE with AS correlation (r=-.49; $R^2=24\%$) indicates that only 24% of the variance in the self-esteem measure is shared by the imaginary audience AS subscale and that 76% of the variance is unique to each. The self-esteem with TS correlation (r=-.28; $R^2=8\%$) indicates that only 8% of the variance in the SE measure is shared by the imaginary audience TS subscale and that 92% of the variance is unique to each. The SE with IAS
correlation \( r = -0.45; R^2 = 0.20 \) indicates that 20% of the variance in the SE measure is shared by the IAS and that 80% of the variance is unique to each. The AS with TS correlation resulted in \( r = 0.41 \) and \( R^2 = 0.168 \), indicating that 17% of the variance in the AS measure is shared by the TS subscale and that 73% of the variance is unique to each. These low correlations suggest a distinction between the self-esteem construct, the AS and TS subscales and IAS construct, and are evidence for both convergent, as well as discriminant validity.

Overall, these estimates of internal consistency are acceptable and correlational analyses attest to the appropriateness of these measures with this sample. The minor discrepancies are probably due to the age differential in the samples.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis 1: There will be a curvilinear relationship between height and self-esteem.

To address this hypothesis, two analyses were conducted: (1) A Pearson's product-moment correlation was computed between height and self-esteem, and (2) eta was calculated for height and self-esteem.

The correlation between height and self-esteem was 0.18 (significant at \( p < 0.05 \)). Statistically this suggests a relationship. However, eta was higher at 0.24, notably larger
than \( r, (r^2 = 0.0324 \text{ or } 3.2\% \text{, almost twice as large}), \) indicating that the relationship between height and self-esteem is not linear, as previously assumed by other research. As can be seen in Figure 1, results from these data strongly suggest a curvilinear association between height and self-esteem, confirming the hypothesis. (See Fig. 1.)

**Figure 1.** Relationship between height and self-esteem

![Graph](image)

The first research question predicted that the Imaginary Audience construct would mediate the relationship between
height and self-esteem.

Data was divided into three height groupings, separately for males and females. By generating a frequency distribution, the average male and female height was determined, and the three groups, consisting of approximately one-third of each sub-sample were "collapsed" into "short, "average," and "tall" groups.

With self-esteem (SE) as the dependent variable, height (low, average, high) and gender (male, female) the independent variables, and IAS scores the covariate, analysis of covariance was computed for the entire sample. This analysis indicated that IAS scores had a significant impact on the relationship between height and self-esteem \[ F(1,414)=109.06 \].

Examination of cell means indicated that the unadjusted mean SE score was 43.08 for males, and 41.50 for females, indicating higher self-esteem overall for males, a finding consistent with other self-esteem research. When the mean SE scores for height were adjusted for the covariate (IAS scores), the scores (41.04 for short, 41.93 for average, and 42.81 for tall), remained equivalent to the unadjusted SE scores, (40.86 for short, 41.78 for average, and 43.14 for tall.) However, these differences are still statistically significant, as was the covariate. (See Table 2.) \[ F(2,414)=4.92 \] indicates that even after taking out the covariate, height group membership still mediated self-esteem
scores, and was statistically significant.

Also remarkable is the lack of significance of sex as a main effect $F(1,414)=.00$. (See Table 2.) When the covariate is extracted, there are no sex differences in self-esteem scores. It appears that self-consciousness accounts for the difference in self-esteem scores between males and females.

The resultant $R^2$ indicates that 22% of the variance in self-esteem scores is explained by gender, height and IAS (self-consciousness). Analyses confirm the research question of whether self-consciousness mediated the relationship between height and self-esteem.

The second research question involved gender differences in the mediating effect of IAS on the relationship between height and self esteem. It was predicted that there would be a greater difference for females. Analyses of covariance identical to the one described above were computed separately for males and females, with self-esteem the dependent variable, height grouping as the independent variable and IAS scores the covariate. The unadjusted mean SE score for short males was 41.97, 42.68 for average males, and 44.31 for tall males. Adjusting for the IAS covariate, the mean self-esteem score for short males fell slightly to 41.92, was 42.40 for average, and rose slightly to 44.49 for tall males. This indicates that IAS scores (self-consciousness) did not have a big impact on males (with $F[1,119]=11.14$.) However, as is shown in Table 3, this relationship is statistically
Table 2: Analysis of Covariance on SE by Sex with IAS

<table>
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<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tr>
<td>IAS</td>
<td>2376.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2376.13</td>
<td>109.06*</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<td>4.92*</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sex x Group</td>
<td>49.21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.61</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>9019.79</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $p<.05$.

significant. $R^2$ indicated 13% of the variance in male self-esteem is explained by height, gender and the covariate (IAS).

The analysis of covariance computed for females indicated that IAS (self-consciousness) had a much greater impact for females [$F(1,294)=91.95$]. The unadjusted mean for short females was 40.36, for average 41.50, and for tall females 42.56. Adjusting for IAS scores, the mean was 40.73 for short females, 41.69 for average, and 42.00 for tall females. The differences between the high and low adjusted mean scores and the unadjusted mean scores was significant,
Table 3: Source Table Depicting the Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Height for Males, Controlling for Imaginary Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covariates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAS</td>
<td>252.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>252.97</td>
<td>11.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>161.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80.79</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>2702.64</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>22.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. p<.05.

and indicates that the covariate was supressing the difference in scores. The impact of IAS (self-consciousness) is much greater for females than males. (See Table 4.) This indicates that self-consciousness is mediating the relationship between height and self-esteem in females, with $R^2$ indicating that 25% of the variance in self-esteem scores explained by IAS and height.

Summary

Preliminary analyses yielded alpha coefficients that were consistent with those found in the literature. Interscale correlations evidenced convergent-discriminant
Table 4: Source Table Depicting the Relationship Between Self-esteem and Height for Females, Controlling for Imaginary Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covariates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAS</td>
<td>1964.74</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1964.74</td>
<td>91.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Effects</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>80.32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.16</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>6279.44</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>21.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. p<.05.

validity and it was concluded that the scales were appropriate for purposes of this study.

Analyses which targeted the hypothesis suggested that the relationship between height and self-esteem was nonlinear. Through analysis of covariance, it was determined that IAS (self-consciousness) mediates the relationship between height and self-esteem. A second analysis of covariance yielded information regarding gender differences in the mediating effect of IAS on height and self-esteem, with self-consciousness having a much greater impact for females than males.
The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the study and to discuss related research. The limitations of the present study are also addressed and recommendations for future research in this area are advanced.

**Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to (1) measure the degree of association between actual height and self-esteem, (2) to measure the degree to which self-consciousness mediated that relationship, and (3) to examine to what extent the mediating effects of self-consciousness were different for males and females.

A convenience sample of 439 university students from a large southwestern university served as subjects for this study. Each was administered a paper and pencil questionnaire consisting of 39 items. This Personal Opinion Survey was made up of self-descriptive variables, the Rosenberg (1965) Self-esteem scale (one of the most frequently used self-esteem measures [Wylie, 1979]), and the Imaginary Audience Scale (Elkind & Bowen, 1979) which assesses an individual's willingness to reveal facets of the self before others (self-consciousness). The IAS is one of only three instruments to assess imaginary audience behavior.
and has received the most validation and research attention.

A series of statistical analyses were conducted to examine the psychometric appropriateness of the self-esteem scale and the imaginary audience scale prior to hypothesis testing. All measures exhibited acceptable levels of reliability (internal consistency) and validity (convergent - discriminant).

To test the hypothesis that there would be a curvilinear relationship between height and self-esteem, two separate statistics were calculated: Pearson's product-moment correlations and eta. To address the two research questions, height was divided into three subgroups separately for males and females, and analysis of covariance was calculated with self-esteem as the dependent variable, gender and height independent variables, and IAS scores the covariate. Two separate (additional) analyses of covariance were calculated to determine the effect of gender on the mediating effects of self-consciousness, with height serving as the independent variable, self-esteem the dependent variable, and IAS scores the covariate. Analyses confirmed the hypothesis and revealed there to be a nonlinear association between height and self-esteem. It was found that the relationship between height and self-esteem was mediated by self-consciousness, being especially pronounced for females. This is consistent with previous literature on self-consciousness in females. Self-consciousness also
accounted for the difference in male and female self-esteem scores.

Discussion

The results of the present study indicated that there is a curvilinear association between self-reported height and self-esteem. Previous research had assumed a linear relationship, and found little if no relationship between actual height and self-esteem.

Through the use of analysis designed for curvilinear associations, a statistically significant relationship (eta=.24) emerged. It appears that individuals who deviate from the average (that is those shorter and taller than average height) have lower self-esteem. This curvilinear relationship appears to peak at culturally acceptable heights and declines at the extremes.

Overall, males scored highest on the self-esteem scale. This is consistent with other findings regarding the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Wylie, 1979). In particular, taller males recorded the highest scores. Shorter than average females scored lowest on self-esteem.

While self-consciousness played a statistically significant role in self-esteem for both sexes, it had no where near the impact for males as for females. For females, self-consciousness and height accounted for 25% of the variance in self-esteem scores, and only 13% for males.
Taller females recorded the highest female self-esteem scores, following the same pattern as males, with self-esteem scores falling further as the individual's height moved from average.

As discussed earlier, extreme height can be viewed as detrimental (Adams, 1978; Dwyer & Mayer, 1969; Frazier & Lisonbee, 1959; Keyes, 1980; Stolz & Stolz, 1944). Exceptional height carries with it the stigma of being a freak, of not fitting in, and extends beyond the logistical problems (e.g. being uncomfortable in airplanes, being a spectacle, and even finding a bicycle to fit), to interpersonal ones (e.g., feelings of self-consciousness in dating, intimidation of peers.)

For females, extreme height is related to heightened self-consciousness possibly due to a discrepant body image in relation to the average peer. So, while height is valued by women when falling within the culturally acceptable range, extreme height may inflate self-consciousness and lower self-esteem.

Perhaps shorter individuals have lower self-esteem due to feelings of being inadequate, powerless, overshadowed, dominated, and intimidated (Dannermaier & Thumin, 1964; Keyes, 1980; Portnoy, 1972). They feel they are perceived as insignificant, inferior. Shortness implies a lack of clout, of being thought of as childlike, infantilized.

The timing and rate of maturation can heighten these
feelings. If a young man is slow or late in physically maturing, is shorter and less "manly" than his peers, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority may develop (Jones & Bayley, 1950; Jones & Mussen, 1957). If these feelings and evaluations of the body (the body image) become part of the self-concept, as they usually do, this internal concept can remain long after the male adolescent has caught up with his peers or the taller girl's peers have caught up with her (Mussen & Jones, 1958). Thus self-concept and self-esteem are inextricably mixed. It has been shown that feelings about the body are correlated with feelings about the self (Berscheid, Walster & Bohnsted, 1973; Lerner, Karabenick & Stuart, 1973; Mendelson & White, 1982; Secourd & Jourard, 1953). And female adolescents are more critical of their bodies than male adolescents (Adams, 1975; Dwyer & Mayer, 1969; Frazier & Lisonbee, 1959; Lerner & Karabenick, 1974; Lerner, Orlos & Knapp, 1976; Secourd & Jourard, 1953). This suggests that children are aware of cultural stereotypes and social norms, and apply them to themselves (Dion Berscheid & Walster, 1972; Staffieri, 1967; Walker, 1962).

Examination of these data indicated that 78% of subjects were unhappy with their present height. Over 90% reported their peers, family and teachers unaccepting of their height. Obviously, the perception of others regarding real characteristics such as height play an important part in the overall evaluation of self. However, as this study
bears out, not only do perceived physical characteristics effect self-esteem, but actual characteristics effect self-esteem as well. That 78% of the students surveyed were dissatisfied with their own height is a disconcerting finding. To find that over 90% of students felt their parents, friends and teachers were unaccepting of their actual height may well account for why a majority of individuals were unhappy with their height.

As discussed earlier, the thoughts, perceptions and evaluations of others are of paramount import during adolescence (Elkind & Bowen, 1979; McCandless, 1970; Piaget, 1972; Schonfeld, 1969). Often, what is important to others and what is of concern only to the adolescent is difficult to discern. Believing others to be as concerned with their looks and thoughts as they are, adolescents construct an imaginary audience of critical onlookers who evaluate and critique their actions and appearance (Elkind, 1967). Previous literature had found girls to be much more susceptible to this audience, and when scoring high on this construct (high self-consciousness on IAS) score lower on self-esteem (Adams & Jones, 1981; Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Enright, Shukla & Lapsley, 1980; Goossens, 1984; Gray & Hudson, 1984; Hauck, Martens & Wetzel, 1986; Mullis & Markstrom, 1986; Pesce & Harding, 1986; Richter, Reaves, Deaver & Lacy, 1982; Riley, Adams & Nielson, 1984; Simmons, Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1973; Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975).
This is consistent with the findings of this study. Females, overall, had lower self-esteem than males, and self-consciousness played a much greater role in the relationship.

This research supports the numerous findings that females are more self-conscious than males, as measured by the imaginary audience construct (Adams & Jones, 1981; Elkind & Bowen, 1979), and that low self-esteem is related to high self-consciousness.

Previously undetermined, however, was that the imaginary audience construct mediated the relationship between height and self-esteem. In light of the findings that self-esteem and actual height are associated, it is not surprising that self-consciousness would effect self-esteem scores. Adolescents are distinctly aware of their size and how much they vary from the their peers (Dwyer & Mayer, 1969; McCandless, 1970; Schonfeld, 1969; Stolz & Stolz, 1944), particularly for females as this is in accordance with female socialization, enculturation and the biological imperative (Erikson, 1950).

Limitations

In reporting the findings of this study, it is acknowledged that whatever generalizations may be drawn must be done so with caution. Generalizability of findings to populations other than the one described in this study would
be suspect. The sample used in this study represents the extreme top end of adolescence (18 to 21 years old), and the subjects were of substantial enough socioeconomic level to attend a major university.

Care must be taken with generalizing the self-esteem measure across samples. As discussed earlier, socioeconomic level, gender and geographical location could effect the outcome of scores, posing a threat to external validity.

This particular study made use of self-reported rather than actual height. While it seems improbable that subjects would inaccurately report their own heights on an anonymous questionnaire, social desirability could effect these reports.¹

Data on the construct validity of the Abiding-Self and Transient-Self Scales indicate mixed evidence for the argument of the imaginary audience concept as an operationalized construct. Findings are inconsistent due to variables such as individual timing of maturation, development of cognitive abilities, and initiation of dating behavior (Adams & Jones, 1981). However, the IAS instrument as a whole, is still recommended as worthy of use in the study of self-consciousness.

¹One questionnaire filled out by a female had provided her height but not her weight -- only a cryptic "too much!"
Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research would do well to address the validity of the imaginary audience construct. Expansion and revision of the instrument is needed in order to enhance its psychometric properties. The impact of pubertal change, peer pressure, cultural sex-role attitudes, differential parenting, size of family, and on-set of dating behavior on adolescent egocentrism needs to be explored, and the construct of the imaginary audience needs to be further justified, investigated, and refined.

2. Social reactions of others, because of varying degrees of physical attractiveness and certain physical characteristics lead individuals to internalize certain differing social characteristics (Adams, 1978; Adams & Crossman, 1978; Adams & Read, 1983; Lerner, Karabenick & Stuart, 1973; Lerner & Karabenick, 1974; Snyder, Tanke & Berscheid, 1977; Stohl, 1981). However, it is not clear how the association between physical attractiveness and personality characteristics is acquired: whether the history of social exchange due to the individual's degree of attractiveness is more influential than the immediate social exchange. This needs to be determined.

3. Studies support the notion that a certain set of stereotypic behaviors is expected from persons with a
particular body build. Much research has focused on understanding the processes by which impressions of others are formed. Yet more needs to be done to discover to what extent information received in actual social interaction is a product of the perceiver's own actions toward the target person. In addition, the way perceivers interpret the information they assess and the ways they process that information is an important area to investigate. The perception of an interaction may be causal to certain events, as much as certain events are causal to those perceptions.

4. During preadolescent years when girls are slightly taller than boys (Tanner, 1970; Schonfeld, 1969), girls also receive higher grades than boys do (Maccoby, 1966). Then during adolescence when boys become taller, they begin to move ahead academically (Maccoby, 1966). As full-grown adults, males are both taller and achieve more academically than females. Just what is the nature of the effect height has on males' greater achievement? How can self-esteem be nurtured?

5. Perhaps the same nonlinear analysis employed in this study (eta) could be applied to the relationship between weight and self-esteem and a significant relationship found. Previous studies have utilized linear methods of assessment
and found no relationship.

6. Cross-cultural research on relationships between physical characteristics, personality, and behavior in societies where these variables are ascribed different cultural connotations would be valuable.
PERSONAL OPINION SURVEY

1. What is your birth month? 

2. What is your birth year? 19

3. What is your year in school? (Circle one.)
   - Freshman
   - Sophmore
   - Junior
   - Senior
   - Graduate
   - Other

4. What is your height in feet and inches? ___feet and ___inches.

5. What is your weight in pounds? ___pounds.

6. What is your marital status? (Circle one.)
   - single
   - married
   - divorced
   - separated
   - second marriage
   - widow(er)

7. If you are married or have a significant relationship (steady dating or living together), what is the height of your spouse in feet and inches? ___feet and ___inches.

8. If you are married or if you have a significant relationship (steady dating or living together), what is the weight of your spouse in pounds? ___pounds.

9. The following best describes my biological family:
   - mostly all short in stature.
   - mostly all tall in stature.
   - differing heights.

10. Is the biological parent of the same sex... 
    - short in height.
    - medium in height.
    - tall in height.

11. How tall is your biological mother? ___feet, ___inches.

12. How tall is your biological father? ___feet, ___inches.

13. Compared to your closest friends, how would you place your level of attractiveness on a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being above average, 5 being average, and 1 being below average? (Circle one number.)
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   - below average
   - average
   - above average

14. On a scale of 1 to 5, where would you place your own satisfaction with your height, with 1 being very happy and 5 being unhappy? (Circle one number.)
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   - very happy
   - unhappy

15. On a scale from 1 to 5, was your height acceptable by your peers? (Circle one number.)
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   - total acceptance
   - not accepting
16. How accepting of your height was your family?
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   total acceptance not accepting

17. How accepting of your height were your teachers?
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   total acceptance not accepting

DIRECTIONS: Each of the following statements reflect personal feelings held by some people in this society. We are interested in how much you agree with each statement. Because these statements reflect personal feelings and attitudes, there are no right and wrong answers. The BEST response to each of the following statements is your PERSONAL OPINION. We have tried to cover many points of view. You may find yourself agreeing with some of the statements and disagreeing with others. Whether you agree or disagree with any statement, you can be sure that many other people feel the same way as you do.

RESPOND TO EACH STATEMENT, ACCORDING TO YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS, BY CIRCLING THE ANSWER THAT BEST REFLECTS YOUR OPINION.

SA = STRONGLY AGREE
A = AGREE
N = NOT SURE
D = DISAGREE
SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE

SD D N A SA 18. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
SD D N A SA 19. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
SD D N A SA 20. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
SD D N A SA 21. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
SD D N A SA 22. At times, I think I am no good at all.
SD D N A SA 23. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
24. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
25. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
26. I certainly feel useless at times.
27. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

DIRECTIONS: Please read the following stories carefully and assume that the events actually happened to you. Place a check next to the answer that best describes what you would do or feel in the real situation.

28. You are looking forward to a very important party. You arrive after an hour's drive from home. Just as the party is beginning, you notice a grease spot on your trousers or skirt. (There is no way to borrow clothes from anyone.) Would you stay or go home?
   ____ Go home.
   ____ Stay, even though I'd feel uncomfortable.
   ____ Stay, because the grease spot wouldn't bother me.

29. Let's say a visiting professor came to your class and you were asked to tell him a little bit about yourself.
   ____ I would like that.
   ____ I would not like that.
   ____ I wouldn't care.

30. It is Friday afternoon and you have just had your hair cut in preparation for the wedding of a relative that weekend. The barber or hairdresser did a terrible job and your hair looks awful. To make it worse, that night is the most important basketball game of the season and you really want to see it, but there is no way you can keep your head covered without people asking questions. Would you stay home or go to the game anyway?
   ____ Go to the game and not worry about my hair.
   ____ Go to the game and sit where people won't notice me very much.
   ____ Stay home.

31. If you went to a party where you did not know most of the people, would you wonder what they were thinking about you?
   ____ I wouldn't think about it.
   ____ I wonder about that a lot.
   ____ I would wonder about that a little.
32. You are sitting in class and have discovered that your jeans have a small but noticeable split along the side seam. Your teacher has offered extra credit toward his/her course grade to anyone who can write the correct answer to a question on the blackboard. Would you get up in front of the class and go to the blackboard, or would you remain seated?

- Go to the blackboard as though nothing had happened.
- Go to the blackboard and try to hide the split.
- Remain seated.

33. When someone watches me work . . .

- I get very nervous.
- I don't mind at all.
- I get a little nervous.

34. You are supposed to have your picture taken with a group of other students, but you injured yourself the day before and scraped your face. You would like to be in the picture but your cheek is red and swollen. Would you have your picture taken anyway or stay out of the picture?

- Get my picture taken even though I'd be embarrassed.
- Stay out of the picture.
- Get my picture taken and not worry about it.

35. One person said, "When I'm with people I get nervous because I worry about how much they like me."

- I feel like this often.
- I never feel like this.
- I feel like this sometimes.

36. You have been looking forward to your friend's party, but just before the party, your roommate tells you she/he accidentally washed all your clothes with a red t-shirt that faded all over the other clothes. Now all your jeans are pink in spots. The only thing to wear are your jeans that are too big and too baggy. Would you go to the party or would you stay home?

- Go to the party, but buy a new pair of jeans to wear.
- Stay home.
- Go to the party in either the pink or baggy jeans.
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