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PERCEPTIONS OF HEIGHT, ATTRACTIVENESS, AND POWER

by  
Michelle A. Worth

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
May 11, 2004

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved \_\_\_\_\_ May 11, 2004 \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABSTRACT

Michelle A. Worth  
PERCEPTIONS OF HEIGHT, ATTRACTIVENESS, AND POWER  
2003/04  
Dr. Eleanor Gaer  
Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling and Applied Psychology

The purpose of this study was to explore how perceptions of physical attractiveness and power changed based on an individual's height and gender. Participants were 117 Rowan University students (53 males and 64 females, mean age = 20.9 years). Students were administered a packet that asked demographic data including their age, sex, height, weight, major, hometown, academic status, and marital status. Upon completion of this data, the students were asked to complete a packet where they viewed 10 target persons that varied in height and sex, then answered a series of questions about their perceptions of the target's attractiveness and power. There was a positive relationship between the height of a male and how powerful he was perceived. Female power ratings were relatively constant, regardless of height. There was also a positive relationship between the height of females and their perceived physical attractiveness, attractiveness scores increased as height increased. Average height males were perceived as the most attractive, and shorter males were rated as least attractive. Tall males were seen as slightly less attractive than average height males.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In American society physical attractiveness is measured and assessed in various ways and the effect it has on individuals is strong. It is impossible to measure the myriad qualities of physical attractiveness so it is therefore necessary to isolate one particular aspect of physical attractiveness and assess the implications of that trait. This present study examined how individuals' body heights are related to their perceived physical attractiveness, in addition to their perceived power. Perceived power referred to how dominant and influential a person was perceived to be in a work and social situation. This study also assessed any gender differences when perceiving height, attractiveness, and power.

Boyson, Pryor, and Butler (1999) examined at how the height of women affected participants' attitudes towards target stimuli. More specifically, this study examined whether a woman's height would be associated with an increased perception of dominance. Participants were asked to rate profile pictures of women that were shorter, of equal height, or taller than a male's profile picture that remained the same height. Participants were administered a questionnaire that assessed control, influence, importance, dominance, and autonomy related to the target picture. The participants were also asked to rate the height of the male and female in each picture.

The results yielded significant differences in the taller female condition, leading to the conclusion that the participants did indeed feel that tall females were more

dominant than males in all conditions. This may have been the result of only using profile drawings of males and females as stimuli.

Rump and Delin (1973) examined the effect of ascribed status on the perceived height of target persons. The researchers hypothesized that an individual with a higher status would be perceived as taller. In addition, another hypothesis offered was that a lower status tall person's height would be underestimated. Participants were asked to view either a short or tall man. They were also told that this man was a postgraduate student, a lecturer, a senior lecturer, or a professor. The participants were then asked to rate the target man's height. In addition, the participants also rated the target man's charm and self-confidence on a Likert-type scale. The results of the data supported the hypothesis that with the highest status, the short man received the lowest height estimate. Furthermore, with the highest status, the tall man received the highest height estimate.

Jackson and Ervin (1991) investigated height stereotypes of males and females in the United States. With regard to men, the authors hypothesized that taller men were perceived as more physically attractive and had greater professional status than shorter men. With regard to females, the authors hypothesized that shorter females were perceived as more physically attractive than taller women, but had less professional status than taller women. Half of the male and female participants were asked to rate targets based on a brief description of a male or female with manipulated heights equal to a short, average, or tall person. The participants rated the targets on several bipolar items that assessed social attractiveness, professional status, personal adjustment, masculinity, and athletic orientation. The other half of participants were given the same stimuli but were instead asked to rate the percentage of people who would fit into the category of the

bipolar traits listed above. The last page of the questionnaire asked for demographic information about the participants and also asked what they considered to be short and tall.

The authors of this experiment found that it was more of a liability for a man to be short than it was an asset for a man to be tall. In addition, short women were perceived as less physically attractive than average or tall women. Furthermore, tall women were consistently perceived as having a higher professional status than shorter women.

Shepperd and Strathman (1989) investigated the relationship of height and attractiveness in terms of dating behavior. Participants consisted of students who were asked to complete a questionnaire packet about demographic information, dating behavior, and questions regarding a photograph of a male and a female. This photograph depicted a female who was taller than the male, a female who was the same height as the male, or a female who was shorter than the male. Students were asked if they preferred to date people who were shorter than them, the same height as them, or taller than them. In addition, they were also asked how frequently they dated. Students were also asked to rate their previous dates on attractiveness, height, and frequency of dates. With regard to the photograph, students were asked four distracter questions and one question assessing the physical attractiveness of the picture person.

The researchers found that males preferred to date females shorter than themselves, while females preferred to date males taller than themselves. In addition, the researchers also found that short females dated more frequently than tall females. Therefore, they concluded that short females were dated more by males, regardless of their height and were perceived as more physically attractive. With regard to males, taller



men were dated more frequently than short or average height males. However, although females reported dating tall men more frequently, they did not rate their taller dates as more attractive than their shorter or average height dates.

Graziano, Brothen, and Berscheid (1976) examined the impact height has on interpersonal attractiveness. The authors hypothesized that as a man's height increased, his perceived physical attractiveness also increased. Furthermore, this was hypothesized to be true in the case of both male and female raters. Participants in the first study were all female and were classified as short, medium, and tall. Nine photographs of men were used as stimuli and each was previously rated for facial attractiveness. The photographs used in the study obtained about equal ratings in physical attractiveness. Three men were identified as short, medium, or tall. Participants viewed the pictures and then assessed each photograph using an "impression questionnaire" that listed several bipolar traits such as warm versus cold or strong versus weak. There were also three Likert-type rating scales that assessed the physical attractiveness of the photographed men. The participants then completed three personality inventories. This study found that across all the qualities analyzed, women preferred men of medium height consistently.

This study was replicated except all of the participants were males. Each male judge participant was deemed short, medium, or tall. The participants were asked to evaluate how attractive the photographed men would be to a woman. Furthermore, the participants were also asked to rate how much they would personally like each photographed male. In the second study, the data showed that men do not feel that height is important to women when assessing attractiveness. Furthermore, the second study found that short men were liked more by their male raters and that they were also rated

more positively than medium or tall men. The authors explained these findings by putting them into a social power context. What this means was that medium and tall men rated shorter men more favorably because they perceived shorter men as less of a threat to them. Therefore, in a social power struggle where “bigger is better” an average-sized or taller man would feel less intimidated by a shorter man.

Brown, Cash, and Noles (2001) studied determinants of physical attractiveness and how it related to gender. More specifically, the authors of this study hypothesized that grooming would have a positive effect on physical attractiveness and facial and body features would play a significant role on assessing physical attractiveness. Furthermore, the authors also predicted that a static measure of physical attractiveness when combined with measures related to the aforementioned qualities would also be a key determinant of dynamic attractiveness, certain nonverbal traits would also be important in determining attractiveness. This study utilized a static and dynamic view of attractiveness where static was the view of the target person in a fixed clip of a video segment and dynamic was the view of the target person in motion. In addition, Brown et al. also hypothesized that physical attractiveness was related to perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

Raters were told that the purpose of the study was to examine how well participants could rate different attributes of a target person based on visual stimuli. Raters watched a video segment that ended with a posed shot of the target person. No audio information was included and the experimenter paused the tape on the posed shot so that this picture remained during the rating process. However, the participants were advised to use the whole tape as a basis of their rating. The participants were asked to rate the target people on grooming (e.g., hair neatness, clothes), traits (e.g., masculinity,

femininity), dynamic physical attractiveness (e.g., facial and body attractiveness), and static physical attractiveness (e.g., frozen posed shot) on several Likert-type scales.

The researchers found that individuals do not base their perceptions of physical attractiveness on facial features alone. Facial and body features serve as predictors of overall static and dynamic attractiveness. However, Brown et al. found that neither facial nor body features can be deemed a more powerful predictor of attractiveness. The data also yielded a positive correlation between groomed target persons and ratings of attractiveness. This study did, however, fail to illustrate that further information about physical attractiveness could be gathered from dynamic or moving stimuli. Therefore, the authors concluded that nonverbal behavior does not play a significant role in determining physical attractiveness. The researchers did find that physical attractiveness is related to the perception of certain traits such as friendliness in the case of facial attractiveness, but not with regard to body attractiveness. This study also found that men with stronger attributions of masculinity and females with stronger attributions of femininity are perceived to be more physically attractive. It was found that in order to be perceived as physically attractive, one must have possessed certain physical characteristics and also have used these qualities in gender-specific ways.

Morrow and McElroy (1984) examined the impact of a target person's sex, past performance, and physical attractiveness. The researchers hypothesized that when a target person is rated high in physical attractiveness, he or she will also be rated higher in their performance. The participants of this study were male faculty members. Participants received a packet, which described a student, and typical grades that they received in their coursework. The faculty members then viewed a picture of the student and

proceeded to answer a number of questions with regard to how they would evaluate the student. The faculty members were also asked to rate the students on several bipolar assessments. These items included how likely they would have given this student the benefit of the doubt and assigned a higher grade, provided extra credit to this student, advised the student to stay in that major, wrote a positive recommendation letter, assigned a final grade, served as the student's academic advisor, and taught this student in another class in the future.

The researchers found that previous performance was the strongest indicator of how a faculty member rated a student. Therefore, this study did not support the hypothesis stated by the researchers with regard to the physical attractiveness aspect of the student.

Pedersen, Markee, and Salusso (1994) studied whether characteristics of physical attractiveness remained consistent from previous studies. In addition, the researchers also examined whether attractiveness traits differed between males and females. Participants were asked to rank from highest to lowest the top three characteristics that makes a male attractive and then to perform the same task with regard to a female.

The researchers found that body-build was overwhelmingly listed as the most important feature to assess physical attractiveness. In addition, facial features, such as eyes, were also important in assessing an individual's attractiveness. Furthermore, skin was also found to be an important indicator of physical attractiveness. With regard to females, hair was said to also be important when assessing physical attractiveness, but not necessarily true with regard to males.

Chia, Allred, Grossnickle, and Lee (1998) studied the relationship between physical attractiveness and achievement-related variables such as academic success, intelligence, and initiative. The authors hypothesized that compared to unattractive people and women, attractive people and men would be perceived as performing better academically, possessing more qualities related to academic success, more intelligent, exhibiting more initiative, and achieving more due to ability and effort. Participants were shown photographs of an attractive man, an attractive female, an unattractive man, and an unattractive female deemed by a previous study involving mock jurors (Castellow, Chia, & Wuensch, 1988). These four target persons had received the highest attractiveness ratings and lowest unattractiveness ratings for both men and women, respectively. All four stimuli photographs were Caucasian. Participants were given a questionnaire with demographic information and a brief description of the experiment. In addition, the questionnaire explained that the pictured target persons were involved in a previous study on campus about academic success and the participants were asked to predict academic success for the students photographed. The Achievement Scale on the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) was used to measure achievement traits. These adjectives were rated on a Likert-type scale. The next part of the questionnaire assessed the target persons' influence ability, effort, course difficulty, and luck, by assessing these items on a Likert-type scale. The last part of the questionnaire asked participants to rate the attractiveness of the target persons on a Likert-type scale. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: attractive versus unattractive or men versus women.

The results of the data found that men and attractive persons are perceived to have average achievement-related qualities. In addition, physical attractiveness was not as

important in impression construction as achievement-related variables. Another important implication of this research was that less attractive males consistently received the highest ratings while less attractive females received the lowest ratings. Therefore, the data found that less attractive men possessed the highest academic ability and less attractive women possessed the least amount of academic success. This finding shown demonstrated a potential attractiveness bias with regard to women operating in our culture. It is unknown if this bias was applicable to other cultures as well.

Lerner and Moore (1974) investigated academic status with regard to a target person's sex, height, weight, and attractiveness. Two undergraduate students, one male and one female, entered a classroom and were introduced by the same name (i.e., Tony Smith or Toni Smith). Both of these students were of average height, weight, and physical attractiveness. The student then introduced a target person to the participants and he or she was introduced to the participants as an undergraduate, a graduate student, a recent master's degree graduate, a doctoral student, or a recent doctoral degree graduate. The participants were then asked to rate the target person in terms of height, weight, physical attractiveness, and academic status on a Likert-type scale.

The researchers found that for the male target person, an increase in perceived height yielded a decrease in perceived weight and therefore, was perceived to be more attractive. For a female target person, however, the findings showed that height and weight were not related to physical attractiveness, which suggested that other factors were involved when individuals judged the attractiveness of women. In addition, this study found that ascribed academic status was independent of ratings of height, weight, and physical attractiveness.

Jackson and Huston (1975) examined the hypothesis that physically attractive females were more assertive than unattractive females. Participants were recruited on campus when the experimenters mutually agreed on the attractiveness or unattractiveness of a female. A total of five attractive and five unattractive females were selected. The experimenters asked each potential participant if she was willing to participate in a project for their class. The participant then entered another room and was read a questionnaire by a male experimenter. A confederate called the male experimenter out of the room after the questionnaire had been read in its entirety. The experimenter left the questionnaire on the table and went into the hallway to speak to the confederate where she started a stopwatch. The stopwatch continued until a participant either took the questionnaire and filled it out on her own accord or interrupted the experimenter and the confederate to ask if she could begin the questionnaire. If 10 minutes had expired and the participant took no action, the stopwatch was stopped and the experimenter returned to administer the questionnaire. All participants were then asked to complete a measure that assessed assertiveness. This study found that physically attractive females behaved more assertively than physically unattractive females. However, with regard to the assertiveness measure, the data yielded no significant difference between the attractive and unattractive participants.

This study was replicated using a larger sample of participants. In addition, a few key elements of the study were also changed. First, the experiment took place in dormitories and apartments on campus. Second, the experimenter who administered the questionnaire was female rather than male. Third, the experimenters were selected based on their belief that the relationship between physical attractiveness and assertiveness was

false in order to control for experimenter's effects. The results of the replicated study mirrored those of the initial study. More attractive females initiated an assertive response more quickly than unattractive females. The researchers concluded that the data obtained from the assertiveness measure may have been invalid due to the varied period of time when it was administered and the circumstances surrounding the administration of the measure. This experiment demonstrated the difference in social responses from physically attractive and unattractive females.

Campbell, Kleim, and Olson (2001) examined the impact of assertiveness and physical attractiveness in relationship to gender. This study was an extension of an experiment conducted by Jackson and Huston (1975), in which Campbell et al. found to have a confounding variable of frustration. The researchers deemed frustration as a confounding variable due to the fact that an assertiveness measure was administered after the participants waited for up to 10 minutes for the experimenter who was distracted by a confederate. This method was used to explore if more attractive females were more assertive than less attractive females. The present study asked undergraduate students to respond to an ambiguous question while being videotaped. Their answer allowed assertiveness to be assessed by the length of time they spoke and their pitch and volume. Participants completed a measure designed to assess assertiveness. Physical attractiveness was assessed by two female and two male judges who rated each participant on a scale ranging from very attractive to very unattractive. The results indicated that the more attractive females spoke for a shorter amount of time than the less attractive females. The authors concluded that this may have occurred because the more attractive females felt more confident and therefore did not feel that they needed to justify their answers.



Furthermore, the more attractive females spoke sooner than the less attractive females. In addition, perceived more attractive men spoke for a shorter amount of time than less attractive men. No statistical significance was found for any measure of assertiveness for neither men nor women. This study expanded the range of assertive behavior with regard to physical attractiveness.

Sprecher (1989) investigated attraction in terms of physical attractiveness, earning potential, and expressiveness with regard to the opposite sex. Sprecher hypothesized that all three characteristics influenced how attracted an individual was to a target person, but physical attractiveness had the strongest effect. In addition, the author also hypothesized that men overestimate and women underestimate how important physical attractiveness was to them. Participants were presented with a description of an opposite sex target person and asked to rate them on a number of qualities including dating desirability. The target person was presented as either attractive or unattractive, having a high or low earning potential, and high or low expressiveness. Sprecher found that her hypothesis was supported in that the more a target person was rated as physically attractive, the more attracted the participant was to the target person. Furthermore, both earning potential and expressiveness increased how attractive the participant found the target person.

The aforementioned articles listed a number of hypotheses regarding the relationship between height and attractiveness. In some studies, taller women were found to be more attractive than shorter women. In others, shorter females were found to date more, leading to the conclusion that they were more attractive. The same contradictory research exists for males as well. It was difficult to determine which height is more attractive because a number of confounding variables were present. Some studies

included facial features as part of their stimuli while others used different body types. These two attributes may have produced a number of different responses regarding attractiveness. Furthermore, the use of drawings versus the use of a photograph may have elicited different opinions concerning attractiveness.

However, the aforementioned studies had more consistent findings with regard to power. Most studies found that taller men were perceived as more powerful than shorter men. In addition, studies also found that taller women were perceived as more powerful than shorter females. Taller people were therefore viewed as more dominant and assertive. Additionally, they were also thought to have higher status in a professional context.

The purpose of the current study was to evaluate the impact height has on perceptions of physical attractiveness and power in a professional and social context. Thus far, the literature has been inconclusive as to the role height plays in way males and females are perceived regarding these two attributes. One of the main goals of this study was to obtain more definitive findings regarding how important height was to perceptions of individuals. On the basis of previous research the following hypothesis was constructed: Taller males and females will be viewed as more attractive than average and short males and females. Males in all conditions will viewed as more powerful than females in all conditions. Furthermore, taller females will be viewed as the most powerful while shorter females will be perceived as the least powerful. Power scores for average height females will fall somewhere in the middle.

## Chapter 2

### Method

#### *Participants*

Participants consisted of 117 Introductory Psychology students (53 males and 64 females, mean age = 20.9 years) from Rowan University. All students volunteered to participate in order to receive credit to satisfy part of the requirement for their introductory psychology class.

#### *Materials*

Participants were administered a packet that contained information relevant to demographics, stimuli pictures, and questions related to the pictures. They were seated in a room together and were told that the experiment was about evaluating target persons on various qualities. Approximately 20 students at a time were tested in a classroom.

After the students signed informed consent forms, they were asked to complete the first part of the packet that was related to demographic information. This section asked for participants' age, sex, height, weight, major, hometown, academic status (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior), and marital status. The only data actually used in the analysis are the students' age, sex, height; the rest of the data served as distracter items. The participants were then asked to look at a series of pictures. The pictures in the packet were presented in random sequences to reduce the chance of an order effect. Six sequences of pictures were arranged by assigning each condition a number and listing each number in a grid where none appeared twice in the same column to ensure that no picture would ever be in the same position. Each page presented a picture of a man or a

woman with or without facial features and wearing minimal amounts of clothing. The males were wearing shorts and a tee shirt while the women were wearing shorts and a tank top. Next to each target person was a large desk that served as a point of reference to evaluate the height of the pictured person. There were also captions under the picture, which contained information about the male and female graphic, including their age, height, and hometown (see Figure 1).

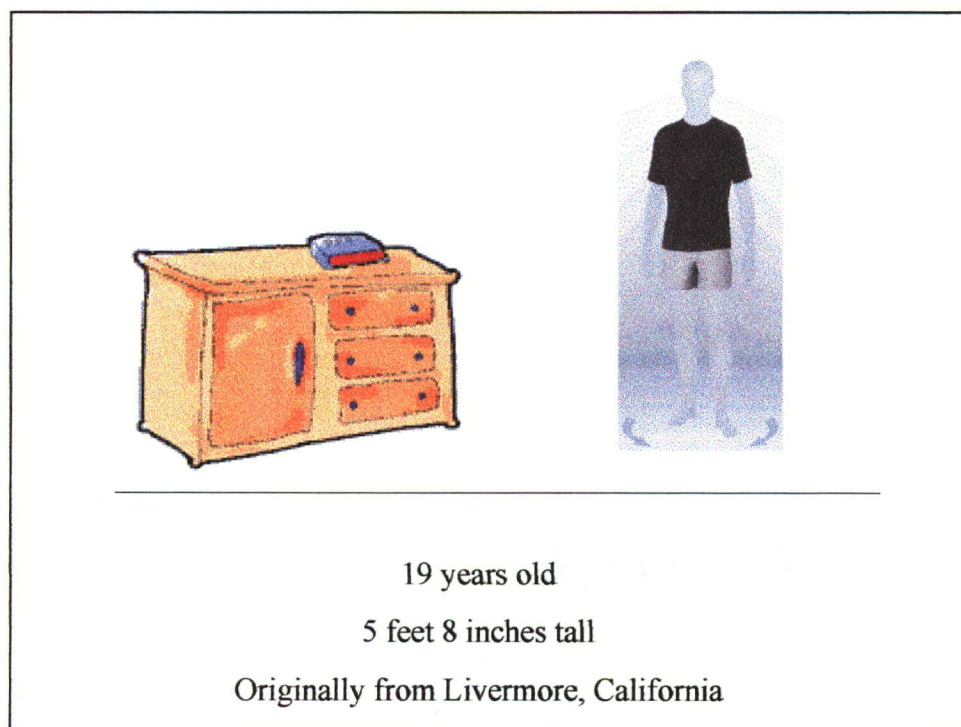


Figure 1: A sample of the target person pictured in the stimuli.

Each packet contained a picture of a short female (5 feet tall), an average female (5 feet 4 inches tall), and a tall female (5 feet 10 inches tall). Additionally, there was a picture of a short male (5 feet 5 inches tall), an average male (5 feet 9 inches tall), and a tall male (6 feet 2 inches tall). The average heights of males and females in the United States was found from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey conducted

by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Furthermore, four distracter pictures of a short and tall female (5 feet 2 inches tall and 5 feet 9 inches tall, respectively) and a short and tall male (5 feet 1 inch tall and 6 feet tall, respectively) were included. The only difference between the distracter target persons and the stimuli target persons was that the former had facial features while the latter had blank faces.

After each picture, participants were asked to rate the males and females on numerous traits such as friendliness, reliability, ability to get along with others, rigidity, self-confidence, quietness, ability to be influential, and humor in a social and work context. These traits, which served as distracter items, were rated on a Likert-type scale where five equals strongly agree, four equals agree, three equals neither agree nor disagree, two equals disagree, and one equals strongly disagree. Participants were also asked a series of questions related to the target person's attractiveness, which comprised the attractiveness rating and a series of questions related to the target person's perceived power, which constituted the power rating. The questions constituting the attractiveness scale asked participants if they perceived the target persons as being physically attractive, good-looking, physically appealing, beautiful or handsome, physically striking, homely, and admired for their looks. Furthermore, the questions comprising the perceived power scale asked the participants to rate how strongly they viewed the target persons as submissive, a typical leader, self-confident, unassertive, influential, having high status, and respected. These questions were related to perceptions of the target persons in either a social or professional context as well. Examples of items on the questionnaire include, "In a work situation, I perceive this person to be submissive" and "In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically attractive." Each questionnaire contained 20 items

and students had to complete the same questionnaire after viewing each picture.

Therefore, participants were asked to complete this questionnaire a total of ten times. The full packet can be viewed in Appendix A. After the students completed the packet, they were thanked for their participation and received a slip that gave them credit for their class, as well as a feedback sheet.

## Chapter 3

### Results

A repeated measures analysis of variance test was used in all statistical calculations. The highest possible power score in each condition was 35 while the lowest was 5. The height of target persons was found to be statistically significant regarding how they were perceived as powerful,  $F(2, 114) = 12.47, p < .001$ . Furthermore, a post-hoc Tukey test found that with regard to power, the short condition ( $M = 21.071$ ) was significantly different from the average condition ( $M = 22.894$ ), the average condition was significantly different from the tall condition ( $M = 24.131$ ), and the tall condition was significantly different from the short condition,  $p < .001$ . This finding supported the hypothesis that perceptions of power would change based on a target person's height.

The difference between the way in which males and females viewed target persons as powerful was approaching statistical significance,  $F(1, 115) = 3.68, p = .058$ ,  $M = 23.135$  for males and  $M = 22.263$  for females.

There was a significant interaction between the size of the target persons and their sex,  $F(2, 114) = 6.71, p = .002$ . The short women ( $M = 21.594$ ) were seen as more powerful than the short men ( $M = 20.547$ ), the average men ( $M = 23.268$ ) were seen as more powerful as the average women ( $M = 22.521$ ), and the tall men ( $M = 25.590$ ) were seen as more powerful than the tall women ( $M = 22.673$ ). This finding implied that as the target persons' height changed, the participants' perception of the target persons' power also changed. See Figure 2.

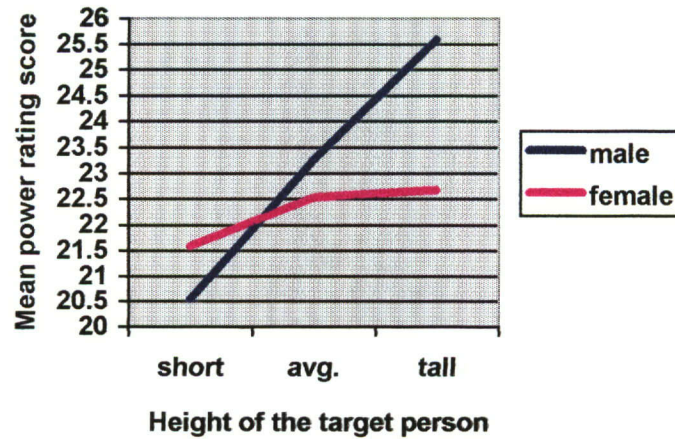


Figure 2: Power ratings with regard to the target persons' height and sex.

Figure 2 shows the significant interaction between the height and sex of the target person with regard to power ratings. According to the data, as male height increased, power scores also increased. However, female power scores remained relatively stable, suggesting that regardless of height females are considered lower in power. In fact, the female power score was relatively close to the short male power score. This finding suggested that short males were equivalent to all females with regard to power.

With regard to males and females, descriptive statistics showed that there was the greatest variance when male participants rated the short female target person on the power scale ( $SD = 18.05$ ). The other standard deviations ranged from 3.0 to 4.4. This indicated that some male participants felt that short females were very powerful, while others felt that shorter females were not powerful at all. Male and female participants did not differ significantly in the way that they rated male and female target persons with regard to power. Yet, the height and sex of the target persons and their power scale ratings were significant,  $F(2, 114) = 6.71, p = .002$ . Furthermore, a post-hoc Tukey test found that regarding the participants' sex, there was a significant difference between the



way they rated power for short and average target persons, average and tall target persons, and tall and short target persons,  $p < .05$ . This finding supported the hypothesis that power rating would differ based on a target person's sex and height.

The highest possible attractiveness score in each condition was 35 while the lowest was 5. With regard to attractiveness, the height of target persons were found to be significantly different concerning their perceived attractiveness,  $F(2, 114) = 27.77, p < .001$ . Furthermore, a post-hoc Tukey test revealed that with regard to attractiveness, the short condition ( $M = 21.348$ ) was significantly different from the average condition ( $M = 23.390$ ), the average condition was significantly different from the tall condition ( $M = 24.003$ ), and the tall condition was significantly different from the short condition,  $p < .05$ . This finding supported the hypothesis that as target persons' height changed, perceptions of their attractiveness also changed, with taller people viewed as being more attractive. In addition, there was a significant interaction for the way in which male and female participants viewed male and female target persons,  $F(1, 115) = 17.52, p < .001$ . For males the mean for male targets was 21.862 and for female targets it was 23.006. For females the mean for male targets was 24.083 and for female targets it was 22.703. This finding was predictable because males usually find females more attractive than other males and females usually find males more attractive than other females. Figure 3 illustrates the differences found in male and female ratings of attractiveness.

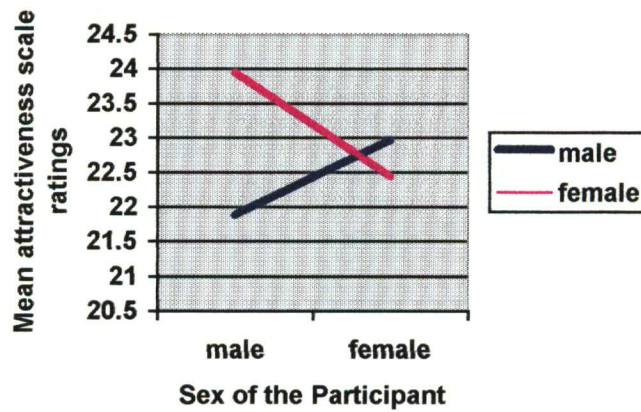


Figure 3: Attractiveness ratings of male and female target persons based on the sex of the participant.

Figure 3 shows the interaction between the sex of the participant and the sex of the target person related to attractiveness. Specifically, males rated females as more attractive and females rated males as more attractive. This could easily be explained as a natural inclination to find the opposite sex more attractive.

Moreover, the interaction of height of the target persons and sex of the target persons is approaching statistical significance,  $F(2, 114) = 2.30, p = .105$ , supporting the initial hypothesis that height impacted perceptions of attractiveness. This finding is illustrated in Figure 4.

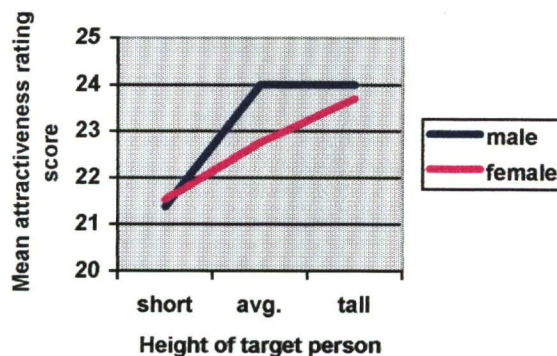


Figure 4: Attractiveness ratings with regard to the target persons' height and sex.

According to the data, shorter men were viewed as the least attractive, average height men were seen as the most attractive and taller men were rated as slightly less attractive than men of average height. However, female attractiveness ratings increased as their height increased. Furthermore, shorter females were rated more attractive than shorter males. Besides that condition, males were rated as being more attractive than females. This may have been the result of having slightly more female participants than males.

There was also an interaction approaching significance for the height and sex of the target persons and the sex of the participant,  $F(2, 114) = 2.33, p = .102$ . This finding supported the original hypothesis in that target persons in each height condition were viewed differently regarding physical attractiveness. Male participants found tall females to be more attractive than tall males, while female participants found average and tall males to be more attractive than average and tall females. There was also a significant between subject difference for males and females  $F(1, 115) = 3.98, p = .048$ , with males ( $M = 22.43$ ) having slightly lower overall attractiveness rating scores than females ( $M = 23.39$ ).

## Chapter 4

### Discussion

One purpose of the present study was to evaluate whether or not height impacts perceptions of power. With regard to males, height was an indication of how an individual was viewed as powerful. Therefore, the hypothesis related to power was supported by the findings of this study. It was also similar to the findings of previous research that taller men are often found as more attractive. There is an overwhelming body of literature that has found that as male height increased perceptions of power also increased. This finding can be explained by the fact that a taller male's stature may appear intimidating, yielding other individuals to perceive him as more powerful, dominant, and assertive. However, unlike previous research, this current study did not find that taller women are perceived as more powerful. In fact, women in all height conditions were rated relatively the same with regard to power suggesting that females as a whole are not viewed as typical leaders. This stereotype may prevail due to the fact that women are found in leadership roles less often than males. Another interesting finding was that short males were rated similarly to all females, suggesting that shorter males are thought to lack the same kind of power traits that women are thought to lack.

A second purpose of this study was to explore the impact height had on perceptions of physical attractiveness. With regard to females, height was an indication of how attractively an individual was viewed. Consequently the hypothesis concerning physical attractiveness was supported by the findings of this study. Additionally, it concurs with some of the previous research in this area. Some literature has supported

the hypothesis that taller women are perceived as more physically attractive. However, there is another body of literature that shorter females were perceived as more attractive. Previous studies have used a number of operational definitions to define attractiveness, including frequency of dates. In that particular study, shorter females were found to be the most attractive because they dated the most frequently. In contrast, this present study used a number of traits synonymous with attractiveness to assess physical attractiveness. Therefore, the difference in the way physical attractiveness was defined may explain why different results were obtained.

The hypothesis related to males and physical attractiveness ratings was not supported by the findings of this study. It was hypothesized that as male height increased, ratings of attractiveness would also increase. However, average height males were found to be most attractive and tall males were found to be slightly less attractive. Shorter males were found to be the least attractive. Previous studies have found that taller males were more attractive because they dated more than shorter males. This same study also found that females preferred to date males taller than themselves. The average height male was taller than a majority of the females who participated in this study, leading to the conclusion that females would find the average and taller males more attractive. Furthermore, average height males may have been viewed as the most attractive because those are whom individuals have the most contact. Therefore, this finding can be explained by familiarity.

This study was unique because it offered target persons as stimuli who were all exactly the same with the exception of the height variable. In addition, target persons' faces were intentionally left blank so that facial features would not be a potential

confounding variable. Previous research found that facial features were one of the most important characteristics of assessing physical attractiveness. Since the impact of height on physical attractiveness was the purpose of this study, facial features needed to be eliminated. Participants sometimes found it difficult to assess the power and attractiveness of a faceless target person, which supports the idea that the face is an important quality, used evaluate a person. Furthermore, all of the target persons remained the same weight as well, which was done deliberately so that body shape would not be a potential confounding variable. Previous studies have also found that weight is a key characteristic in evaluating the attractiveness of others. Since height was the variable being studied, the weight of the target persons had to be controlled. All of the attributes of the target persons were exactly the same with the exception of their height so that the rating of the participants would reflect how they perceived short, average, and tall people with regard to power and attractiveness.

The findings of this study suggest that height was an influential attribute that may affect our perceptions of others. Consequently, this study provided an interesting insight into various stereotypes associated with a person's height. This was especially true when evaluating short males. They received the lowest ratings for both power and attractiveness. If this rating were applied to their daily environment, they would have deficits in both a social and professional context. Additionally, females as a whole were perceived to lack social and professional power. This finding suggests that females would also have deficiencies in their social and professional worlds. It is important that we are aware that these stereotypes exist in social and professional contexts so that they do not interfere with our evaluations of other people. It is also important to note that power and

attractiveness assessments may also come from a more dynamic evaluation such as the way a person talks or moves, as found in previous research.

Suggestions for further research may include fewer pictures to evaluate.

Participants were asked to study ten pictures and answer the same questionnaire ten times. Some participants may have grown tired of answering the same questions repeatedly, causing their answers to be less accurate in the last pictures than they were in the first pictures of the packet. It may also be interesting to add facial features and different body types to the pictures to see if that makes a difference in how powerful and attractive target persons are perceived.

## References

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APPENDIX A  
STIMULI PACKET

## Informed Consent

I agree to participate in a study entitled “Visual Perceptions of Individuals”, which is being conducted by Michelle Worth, a graduate student in the Masters of Mental Health Counseling and Applied Psychology program at Rowan University. The purpose of this study is to analyze individuals’ perceptions and evaluations of target persons. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from previous studies and will be submitted to fulfill the requirement of a Master’s thesis.

I understand that I will be required to complete a packet of information that will ask me to look at target persons pictured and rate these people on various qualities. My participation in the study should not exceed one hour.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education, provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Michelle Worth at (856) 931-2792 or email her at [wort1699@students.rowan.edu](mailto:wort1699@students.rowan.edu).

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Intro. to Psychology Instructor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Investigator)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**Demographic Data**

1. Sex:  Male  
 Female

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Height: \_\_\_\_\_ feet \_\_\_\_\_ inches

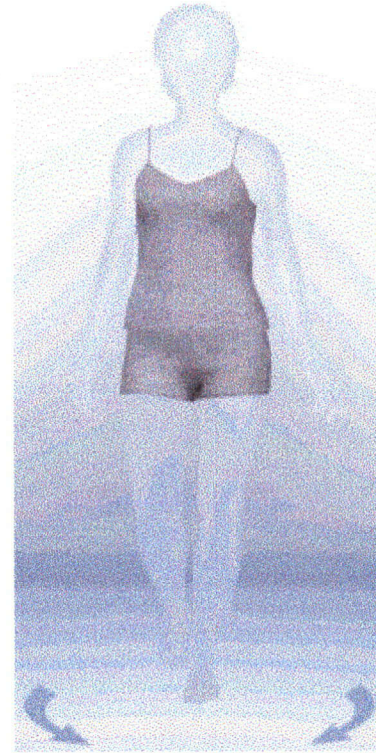
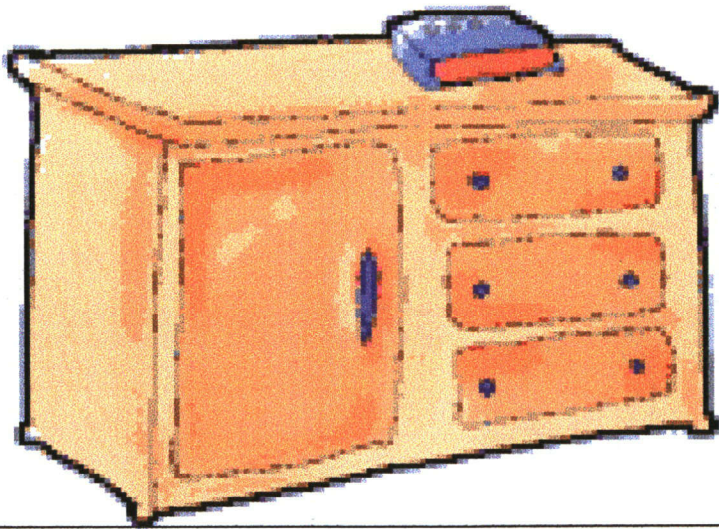
4. Weight (in pounds): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Major: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Hometown (where you are originally from): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Academic Status:  Freshman  
 Sophomore  
 Junior  
 Senior  
 Graduate Student  
 Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

8. Marital Status:  Single  
 Married  
 Divorced  
 Widowed  
 Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_



21 years old

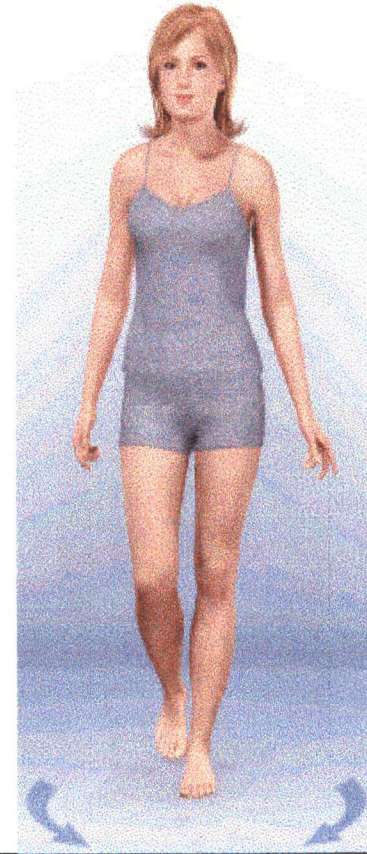
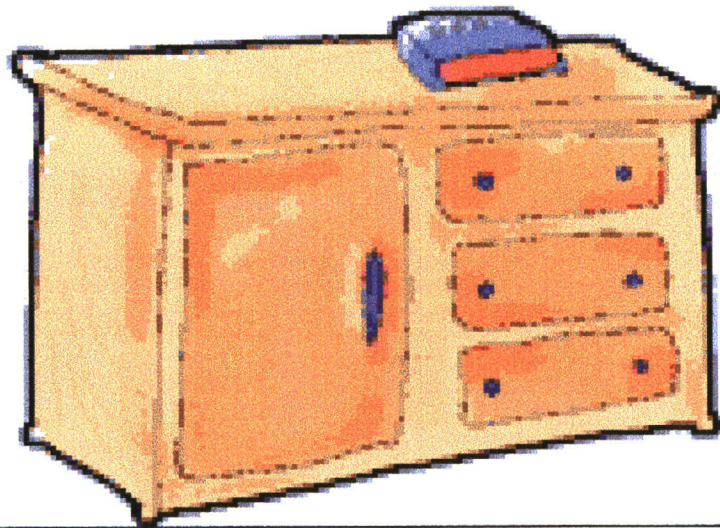
5 feet 4 inches tall

Originally from Williamstown, New York

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree, nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be submissive.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be friendly.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically attractive.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unreliable.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be good-looking.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be a typical leader.            | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. In a social situation, I perceive this person as physically unappealing.       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. In a work situation, I perceive this person to get along well with others.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be flexible.                    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. In a social situation, I perceive this person as beautiful or handsome.       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. In a work situation, I perceive this person to lack self-confidence.          | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be quiet and introverted.    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unassertive.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be influential.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be funny.                    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically striking.      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. In a work situation, I perceive this person to have high status.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be homely.                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. In a social situation, I perceive this person as not admired for their looks. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



21 years old

5 feet 9 inches tall

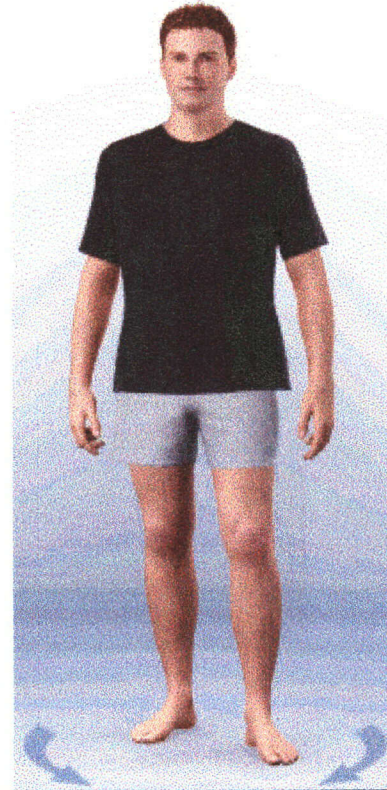
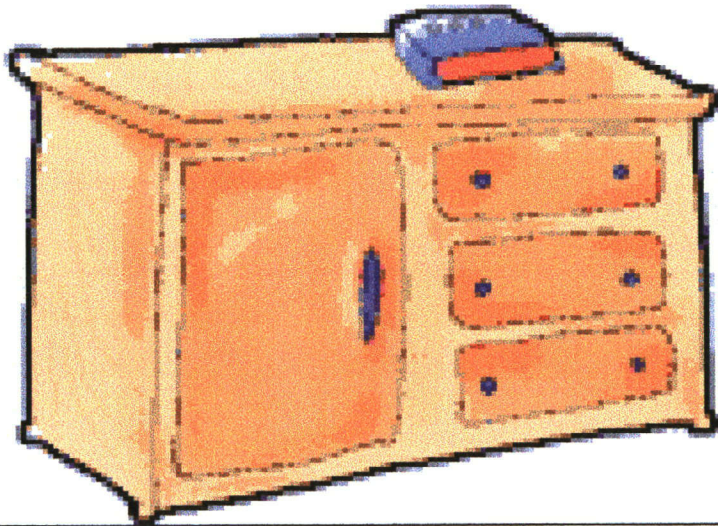
Originally from Manassas, Virginia

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

- 5 = strongly agree
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20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.	5	4	3	2	1





22 years old

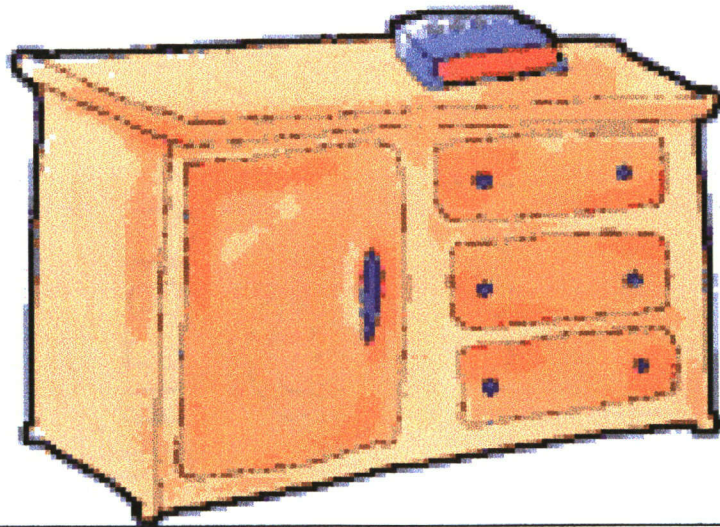
5 feet 1 inch tall

Originally from Crownsville, Maryland

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

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18 years old

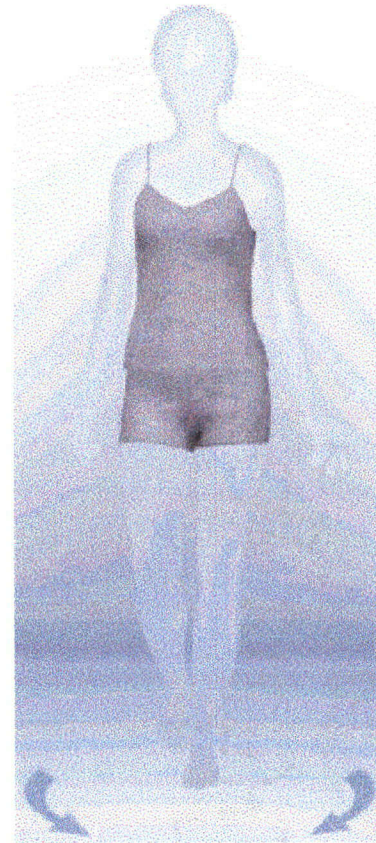
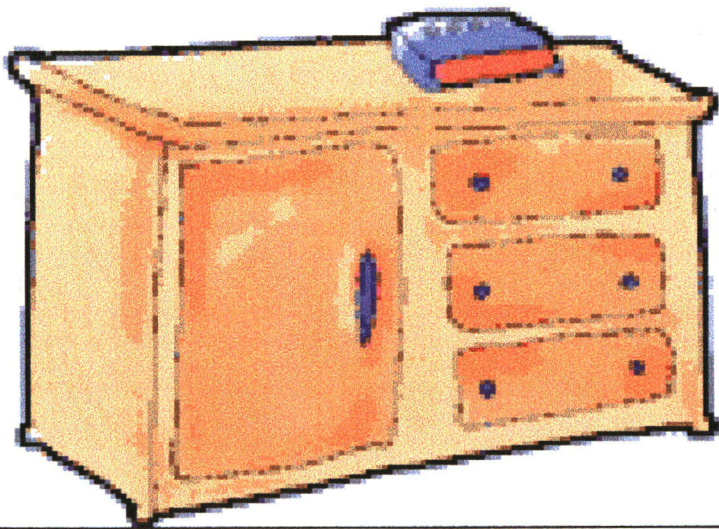
5 feet 5 inches tall

Originally from Madison, Wisconsin

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

- 5 = strongly agree
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| 20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



19 years old

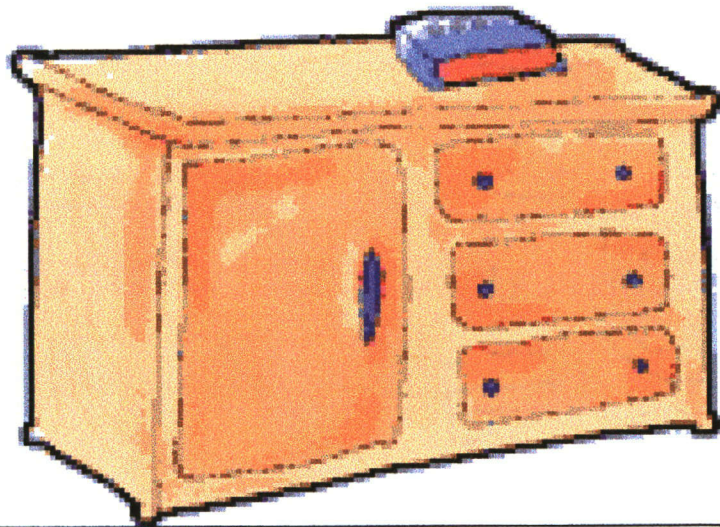
5 feet 10 inches tall

Originally from Ocala, Florida

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

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| 20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



23 years old

6 feet 2 inches tall

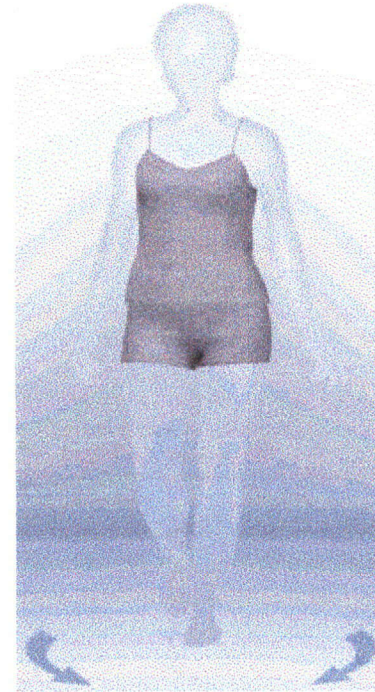
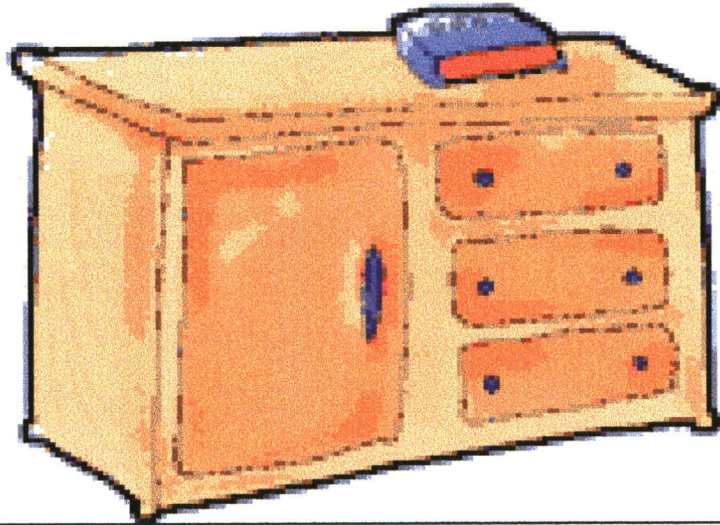
Originally from Natick, Massachusetts

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
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 2 = disagree  
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- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| 20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |





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20 years old

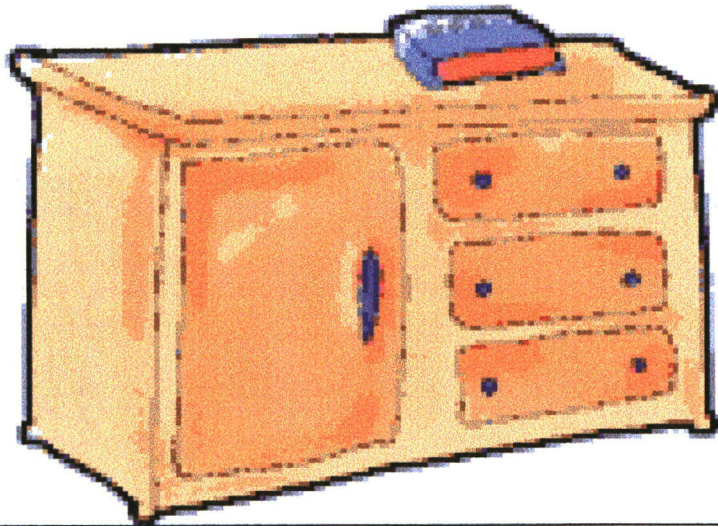
5 feet 0 inches tall

Originally from Tempe, Arizona

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

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2. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be friendly.	5	4	3	2	1
3. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically attractive.	5	4	3	2	1
4. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unreliable.	5	4	3	2	1
5. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be good-looking.	5	4	3	2	1
6. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be a typical leader.	5	4	3	2	1
7. In a social situation, I perceive this person as physically unappealing.	5	4	3	2	1
8. In a work situation, I perceive this person to get along well with others.	5	4	3	2	1
9. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be flexible.	5	4	3	2	1
10. In a social situation, I perceive this person as beautiful or handsome.	5	4	3	2	1
11. In a work situation, I perceive this person to lack self-confidence.	5	4	3	2	1
12. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be quiet and introverted.	5	4	3	2	1
13. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unassertive.	5	4	3	2	1
14. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be influential.	5	4	3	2	1
15. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be funny.	5	4	3	2	1
16. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically striking.	5	4	3	2	1
17. In a work situation, I perceive this person to have high status.	5	4	3	2	1
18. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be homely.	5	4	3	2	1
19. In a social situation, I perceive this person as not admired for their looks.	5	4	3	2	1
20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.	5	4	3	2	1



19 years old

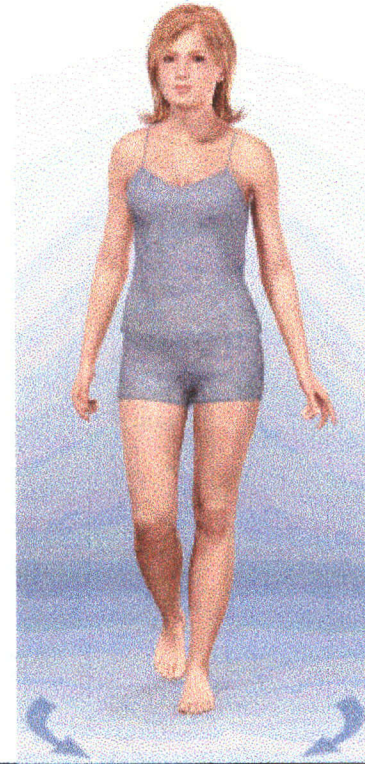
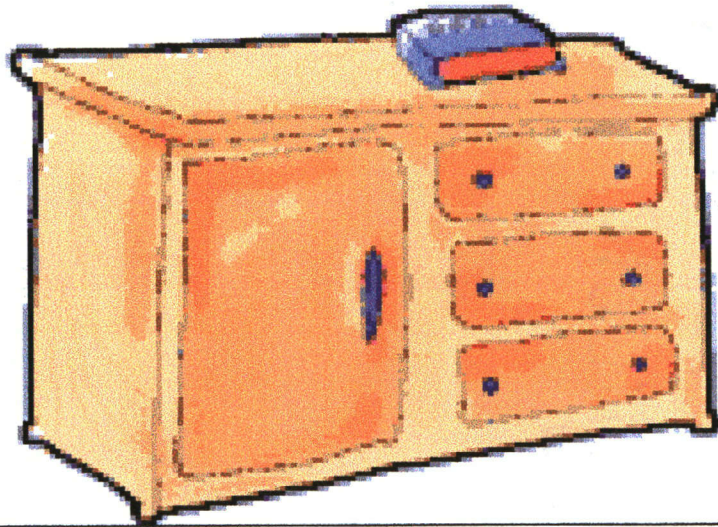
5 feet 9 inches tall

Originally from Livermore, California

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = neither agree, nor disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

1. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be submissive.	5	4	3	2	1
2. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be friendly.	5	4	3	2	1
3. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically attractive.	5	4	3	2	1
4. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unreliable.	5	4	3	2	1
5. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be good-looking.	5	4	3	2	1
6. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be a typical leader.	5	4	3	2	1
7. In a social situation, I perceive this person as physically unappealing.	5	4	3	2	1
8. In a work situation, I perceive this person to get along well with others.	5	4	3	2	1
9. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be flexible.	5	4	3	2	1
10. In a social situation, I perceive this person as beautiful or handsome.	5	4	3	2	1
11. In a work situation, I perceive this person to lack self-confidence.	5	4	3	2	1
12. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be quiet and introverted.	5	4	3	2	1
13. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unassertive.	5	4	3	2	1
14. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be influential.	5	4	3	2	1
15. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be funny.	5	4	3	2	1
16. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically striking.	5	4	3	2	1
17. In a work situation, I perceive this person to have high status.	5	4	3	2	1
18. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be homely.	5	4	3	2	1
19. In a social situation, I perceive this person as not admired for their looks.	5	4	3	2	1
20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.	5	4	3	2	1



19 years old

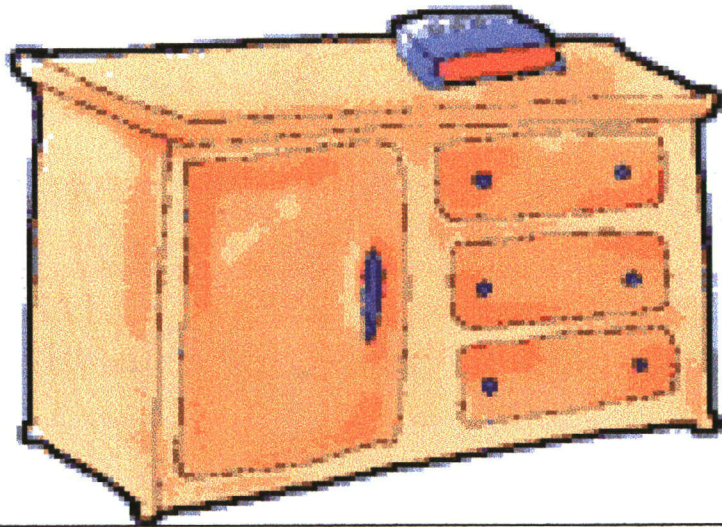
5 feet 2 inches tall

Originally from Akron, Ohio

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree, nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be submissive.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be friendly.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically attractive.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unreliable.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be good-looking.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be a typical leader.            | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. In a social situation, I perceive this person as physically unappealing.       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. In a work situation, I perceive this person to get along well with others.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be flexible.                    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. In a social situation, I perceive this person as beautiful or handsome.       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. In a work situation, I perceive this person to lack self-confidence.          | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be quiet and introverted.    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unassertive.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be influential.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be funny.                    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically striking.      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. In a work situation, I perceive this person to have high status.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be homely.                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. In a social situation, I perceive this person as not admired for their looks. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



20 years old

6 feet 0 inches tall

Originally from St. Louis, Missouri

**Directions: Please rate the person you are seeing by reading the following statements and rating him or her using the following scale. Please indicate your rating by circling the number after the statement that corresponds with your selection.**

5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = neither agree, nor disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be submissive.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be friendly.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically attractive.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unreliable.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be good-looking.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be a typical leader.            | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. In a social situation, I perceive this person as physically unappealing.       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. In a work situation, I perceive this person to get along well with others.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be flexible.                    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. In a social situation, I perceive this person as beautiful or handsome.       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. In a work situation, I perceive this person to lack self-confidence.          | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be quiet and introverted.    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be unassertive.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be influential.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be funny.                    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be physically striking.      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. In a work situation, I perceive this person to have high status.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. In a social situation, I perceive this person to be homely.                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. In a social situation, I perceive this person as not admired for their looks. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. In a work situation, I perceive this person to be respected.                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



## Feedback Sheet

You have participated in an experiment that assesses whether or not perceptions about physical attractiveness and perceived power change, based on a target person's height.

Thus far, the literature has been inconclusive regarding a person's height and how attractive he or she is perceived by others. For example, Shepperd and Strathman (1989) found that men evaluate other men of average height more positively because they feel less threatened by them. In addition, shorter women were perceived as more physically attractive and dated more often than their average-height and tall counterparts.

However, Jackson and Ervin (1991) found that it is more of a liability for a man to be short than it is an asset for a man to be tall. Furthermore, this study also found that shorter women were perceived as less physically attractive than average or tall women.

With regard to height and power, Boyson, Pryor, and Butler (1999) and Rump and Delin (1973) concur that taller males and females are both perceived to be more powerful in a social and professional context.

Because of your participation in this study, you will receive **60 minutes** of credit in partial fulfillment of your Introduction to Psychology class research requirement. If you have any questions about the experiment or would like to know the outcome of the data collected (available at the end of the semester), you may contact the experimenter, Michelle Worth, at (856) 931-2792 or at [wort1699@students.rowan.edu](mailto:wort1699@students.rowan.edu). Your participation and cooperation is very much appreciated.