"You Get Rained on Last": A Study of the Cultural Implications
of Male Height in the United States

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Anthropology
in the College of Sciences
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term 2009

Thesis Chair: Dr. Elayne Zorn

Abstract

This thesis investigates the effects that cultural ideals of height in the United States have upon how males react to and contend with their physical stature. Anthropological and psychological approaches are used to examine and interpret ways that height is culturally constructed, altered, and perceived by young adult males in the United States. Height has been demonstrated to have economic, political, reproductive, educational, and social consequences that are often overlooked in everyday life. In the United States, certain cultural ideals appear to grant advantages to taller individuals. Understanding how these cultural ideals are constructed and investigating cultural reactions to such ideals provides insight into culture in the United States.

Cyberspace holds some of the answers for understanding how individuals construct and perceive height. Two studies were conducted employing MySpace, a social networking community, to investigate factors that may affect the self-reporting of male height. The self-reporting of height is a manifestation of how individuals chose to culturally represent themselves. MySpace provides a rich source of information and data for investigating the self-reporting of height. The first study determined that median household income had no association with how users choose to self-report their height. The second investigation found that there are significant differences in the way males self-report their height according to ethnicity and sexual orientation. The results underscore the tendency for males to positively distort their self-reported heights to approximate cultural ideals.