

CHILDREN'S MONETARY EVALUATIONS OF
BODY PARTS AS A FUNCTION OF
SEX, RACE, AND SCHOOL GRADE*¹

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SUMMARY

Public school children ($N = 320$) were given a sheet of paper with pictures of seven different body parts and asked to select from a list of numbers a dollar value for each body part. The instructions asked the child to imagine that his or her body had been damaged in an accident. Analysis of variance indicated that males value their bodies more than females. There was an increase in the body evaluations from the third grade to the sixth grade. Black children placed higher values on their bodies than white children did on theirs.

A. INTRODUCTION

There is evidence that females place relatively low values on their bodies. Caskey and Felker (5) reported that female children assign fewer favorable adjectives to their bodies than do males to theirs. Secord and Jourard (11), and Berscheid, Walster, and Bohrnsteid (4) reported similar findings with adult men and women. When Plutchik *et al.* (9) asked persons from youth to old age to place dollar values on various parts of their bodies, males generally selected higher values than females. The Jury Verdict Research Corporation reported that women were less likely than men in cases of bodily injury to file suit (8). They were also less likely to request or to receive large awards. The present study was designed to determine whether or not children place different values on their bodies as a function of sex, race, and school grade.

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B. METHOD

1. *Subjects*

The children were 320 students attending two public schools in DeKalb County, Georgia. School administrators stated that both schools were located in similar low socioeconomic level neighborhoods. Forty black males and 40 black females, and 40 white males and 40 white females were randomly chosen from each of the two grade levels (third grade and sixth grade). The children were administered a pretest of their ability to order numbers from lowest to highest and their ability to order 10 objects (baseball bats, go-carts, etc.) in order of value. Had a teacher believed a particular child did not have an understanding of numbers the child would have been excluded, but all of the children performed correctly on the pretest.

2. *Procedure*

A Body Valuation Form was administered by the first author (a young female). She gave the following instructions:

"Hi! My name is Sandra and I want to talk about insurance. You know what that is, don't you? Insurance is money that you get when you've been in an accident or when you've been hurt. Let's pretend that you were in an accident and a part of your body was hurt. Hurt so bad that it didn't work any more. I'm going to tell you the part of your body that's been hurt, and I want you to tell me how much money you would want the insurance company to give you for that part of your body. Do you all understand?"

I want you to write down how many dollars you think that part of your body that I name is worth. Now I'm going to hand out some papers with pictures on them for you to write your answers on. Don't anyone start until I tell you. Now remember, this isn't a test. I just want you to tell me how much money you think the different parts of your body are worth. Use any of the numbers on the blackboard. You can use any of the numbers more than one time if you wish. Do you all understand?"

The Body Valuation Form had drawings of seven body parts: eye, leg, foot, hand, finger, arm, and ear. There was a blank space for the child to enter his or her response next to each of the drawings. Seven numbers, \$0, \$50, \$150, \$250, \$350, \$450, \$550, were written on the blackboard.

C. RESULTS

The responses of the students to each of the body parts on the Body Valuation Form were compared by means of a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ analysis of variance. The overall difference in valuations as a function of sex was found to be statistically significant, $F(1, 226) = 5.96, p < .001$. Similar main effects were

also found for both grade and race: $F(1, 226) = 2.23, p < .05$; and $F(1, 226) = 4.42, p < .001$, respectively. Male children placed a higher monetary value on their body parts ($\bar{X} = \$306$) than did female children ($\bar{X} = \$230$). Sixth-grade children placed overall higher evaluations on their body parts ($\bar{X} = \$294$) than did third graders ($\bar{X} = \$242$). Black children selected higher monetary evaluations ($\bar{X} = \$310$) than did white children ($\bar{X} = \$227$).

The means and standard deviations of monetary values for the seven body parts as a function of group membership are presented in Table 1. The group means from highest to lowest were as follows: sixth-grade black males ($\bar{X} = \$371$); third-grade black males ($\bar{X} = \$314$); sixth-grade black females ($\bar{X} = \$305$); sixth-grade white males ($\bar{X} = \$299$); third-grade black females ($\bar{X} = \$248$); third-grade white males ($\bar{X} = \$241$); sixth-grade white females ($\bar{X} = \$200$); and third-grade white females ($\bar{X} = \$167$). When data were collapsed across race and only the sex and grade of the children examined, results showed that the children who placed the highest monetary value on their body parts were the sixth-grade males ($\bar{X} = \$335$). This group is followed in decreasing value of body evaluation by third-grade males ($\bar{X} = \$278$), sixth-grade females ($\bar{X} = \252), and third-grade females ($\bar{X} = \$208$).

TABLE 1
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION MONETARY VALUES FOR THE SEVEN BODY PARTS AS A
FUNCTION OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Group	Eye	Leg	Foot	Hand	Finger	Arm	Ear	Overall
3BM	385	358	268	282	189	367	348	314
	199	185	190	216	201	183	211	
3WM	305	258	152	268	130	298	278	241
	232	186	153	217	181	191	221	
3BF	274	361	208	204	134	257	298	248
	173	203	162	158	179	182	190	
3WF	234	239	149	137	43	146	223	167
	227	189	155	194	127	146	222	
6BM	407	380	311	397	277	447	378	371
	174	178	199	179	206	122	183	
6WM	380	371	260	238	140	370	334	299
	164	179	179	186	176	180	202	
6BF	383	300	280	294	189	350	340	305
	186	174	204	191	198	179	194	
6WF	245	265	170	166	73	209	269	200
	205	192	196	186	77	195	228	

Note: \bar{X} is upper, *SD* is lower, figure.

D. DISCUSSION

These results and the prior research literature supports the idea that women generally have a lower sense of body esteem than men do. Body esteem and self-esteem correlate (11, 12); therefore the relatively low body value selection by the female children may also reflect relatively low self-esteem. Black children, according to this study, place a higher valuation on their bodies than do white children. Although the physical characteristics of blacks (skin color, etc.) often serve as negative stimuli to whites (7, 10), the notion that blacks view such stimuli negatively (6) is either unsupported by the research (2, 3) or is not a strong phenomena and rather more typical of preschool black children than adult blacks (13). Baldwin (1) cites many studies which indicate, as does the present study, that blacks make positive self-evaluations. Although increases in monetary evaluations were found with age (and this could signify that older children value their bodies more than younger ones), there is a possibility that the increases reflect changes in children's ideas about money as well as about the values of body parts. Future research might attempt to clarify which is the major reason for the increase and also establish whether or not differential evaluation according to sex and according to race continues on into adolescence.

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