

Bad Finger

I'm a shell of the man I once was. It's all because of an article I read about a recent study on male aggression. Men whose "second finger is much smaller than their fourth," the article states, "are perceived as more dominant and masculine by women." Women are sexually attracted to short second fingers? Where have I been? Where have we all been, us fatheaded males, the past several millennia? We were too busy making feeble jokes about woman's inability to keep a secret! Well, we've been hoodwinked. I used to assume a woman glancing at my second finger was being nosey about my marital status. But now I know, it's not marriage she's contemplating! What other secrets have the ladies been keeping from us? Gentlemen, the ground is opening up beneath our feet.

As things stand, I'm a wreck. In mixed company, I keep my hands on my lap or in my pockets. I tell clerks to keep the change. I purchased an automatic card shuffler. Even brushing my teeth has become a test of my manhood.

I tell myself, I'm overreacting. (But try telling yourself anything--and consider the source.) It's just

one measly study, after all, probably riddled with flaws. For one thing, the testers took the easy way out, using questionnaires, which leads to over-dependence upon the subject's own self-appraisal. In a more properly conducted study on aggression, the questionnaire would be nothing more than a ruse. The real test would occur afterwards, when the subject, thinking he is done, has lowered his guard. Glancing over the subject's answers, the examiner would suddenly frown and say something along the lines of, "What a ***** idiot!" and carefully monitor the response. He may find himself carefully monitoring the response from a prostrate position on the floor. But the results will be more reliable.

I improvised a little experiment of my own, which may serve as a model. I was seated next to a young lady at a dinner party. While she was in mid-sentence, I whipped out my second finger.

"Feast your eyes!" I said.

"On what?" she replied. "I don't see anything."

I know an insult when I hear one.

I went so far as to approach my doctor about getting my

finger shortened. "There's no such operation," he said. "And in your case, it would just be false advertising." I told him this was an unprofessional comment, particularly coming as it did during a physical. When it came time for him to poke me, something unexpected happened. He hesitated; then screamed out, "I can't go through with it! You did this to me! You ruined me! What am I supposed to do now, conduct my exams wearing a mitten?" Later, I called his office and found him in a better state of mind. "My assistants are doing the poking," he explained. "It's legal, as long as I'm the one who says, 'Cough!'"

But as for me, things are beginning to look up. I've had a liberating thought. Maybe I've been counting my fingers from the wrong direction. If that's the case, I've been worrying over nothing.