

VITAL SIGNS

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BEHAVIOR

What Else His Ring Finger Says

A study published in the March issue of *Biological Psychology* suggests that the shorter a man's index finger is compared with his ring finger, the more physically aggressive he is likely to be.

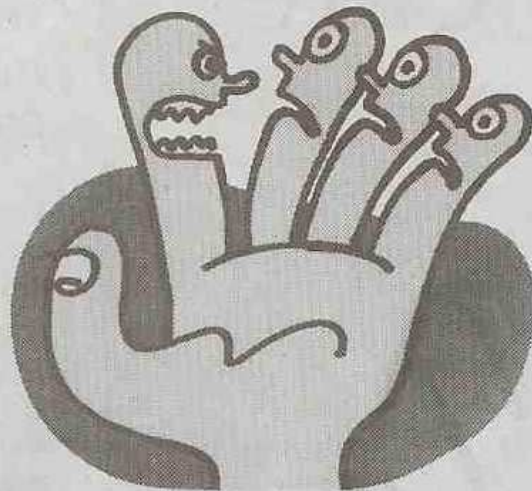
It has been known for more than 100 years that men, unlike women, usually have ring fingers longer than their index fingers.

Now in a study led by Allison A. Bailey, a graduate student in psychology at the University of Alberta, researchers have discovered that in men there is a significant statistical correlation between low index finger length ratio to the ring finger and a propensity for physically aggressive behavior.

Although no one is quite sure, scientists believe that the variation in finger length ratio and the propensity for aggression are both influenced by the level of prenatal testosterone exposure during development.

Using a questionnaire designed to test aggressive tendencies, the researchers examined 298 men and women, all of them psychology students, and then measured their fingers.

Finger length ratio in men did not correlate with measures of an-



Illustrations by Stuart Goldenberg

ger, hostility or verbal aggression, but it correlated significantly with a tendency toward physical aggression.

Female finger length ratios showed no correlation with any of the measures. Ms. Bailey is cautious.

"There really isn't any conclusion you can draw from looking at a single individual's hands," she said.

"There is a lot of variation in digit ratio and aggression among individuals in both sexes," Ms. Bailey added.

"On average, men have shorter index fingers than ring fingers, and females typically have digits of equal lengths."