

SELF-ESTEEM AND ASSERTIVENESS  
OF ADULT MORMON WOMEN

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Today, largely as a result of the women's movement, both men and women are questioning the traditional sex-role stereotypes in the American culture. Particularly for women, the previously viewed feminine roles of housewife and mother are looked upon as limiting and detrimental to self-esteem. The women's movement, by encouraging women to move out into the world of work for personal growth, has created a pressure on housewives either to join the ranks of employed women, or to resist change by proclaiming housewife pride and insisting that the home offers the greater opportunities for personal growth. Thus, adult women, especially the young, educated middle-class housewives, are faced with the challenge of justifying to their husbands and others their choice of roles.

For the women who decide to enter the world of work in their quest for self-fulfillment, the women's movement is encouraging the development of some of the personality traits necessary to compete in the male-dominated marketplace. One of these traits is assertiveness, or the ability to express rights and feelings. To help women to become more assertive, a behavioral procedure was developed called assertiveness training. This training was designed to assist men and especially women in developing appropriate expression of rights and feelings, and in reducing interpersonal anxiety.

Not only is assertiveness training viewed by a number of theorists as a method to aid women in their interpersonal behavior, but some

theorists are even claiming that assertiveness training can enhance self-esteem (Alberti and Emmons, 1978; Fensterheim, 1975; Osborn and Harris, 1975). If these theorists are correct in their assumption that assertiveness training can enhance self-esteem, then it should be a useful procedure to help women in their quest for personal growth. At present, a few studies have supported the theorists who claim that assertiveness training can enhance self-esteem (Percell et al., 1974; Osborn and Harris, 1975; Henderson, 1975; Sisson, 1977), however, others have contradicted them (Williams, 1976; Pachman and Foy, 1978).

To explore the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem, this researcher decided to study a sample of Mormon women, a group supporting the traditional view that the woman's role should be different from the man's, and that married women with children should stay at home and raise them (Kimball, 1977; Tanner, 1974), to see if the interaction of the two variables would be different for them compared to the population in which they lived.

### Justification

Advocates of the women's movement feel that the traditional sex-role is largely responsible for American women having low self-esteem (Jakubowski, 1977; Westervelt, 1978; Scarf, 1979). Traditionalists, such as the Mormons, argue that the traditional sex-role can offer women the greatest opportunity for self-fulfillment and the development of high self-esteem (Kimball, 1977; Smith, 1976; Tanner, 1974). Although sharply divided over the issue of which role offers women the greatest opportunity for personal growth and enhanced self-esteem, both groups

recognize the importance of having a high level of self-esteem. For the most part, however, only the advocates of the women's movement have encouraged women to seek out assertiveness training to enhance their personal growth and self-esteem.

Teachers and counselors in marriage and the family recognize that high self-esteem is an important ingredient in healthy marriages and successful child rearing (Coopersmith, 1967; Satir, 1967; Lederer and Jackson, 1968). If assertiveness is positively related to high self-esteem, in both women advocating the woman's movement and women advocating the traditional feminine role, and if assertiveness training can actually increase a woman's self-esteem, then traditional Mormons as well as advocates of the women's movement might find assertiveness training a useful procedure to enhance self-esteem within the traditional role.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research was to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between two variables: level of assertiveness and level of self-esteem in samples of Mormon and non-Mormon women.

#### Definition of Terms

Mormon woman - a female member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who is over 18 years of age. It is assumed that these members are strong adherents of their church.

Assertiveness - that quality of social boldness as indicated by the total score on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Rathus, 1973).



Self-esteem - the positive or negative attitude toward the self as an object as indicated by the score on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

#### Methodological Assumptions

1. Assertiveness is a personality variable which can be measured by a self-response instrument.
2. Self-esteem is a personality variable which can be measured by a self-response instrument.
3. Each respondent will answer the questionnaires accurately as they apply to her.

#### Theoretical Framework

The hypotheses of this study are based on the symbolic interactional conceptual framework. Followers of this framework make certain assumptions about women and their behavior. First, symbolic interactionalists assume that the processes of human social life and communication are different from those of other animals. Second, they assume that humans live in a symbolic world of meanings, and that they respond to the objects and events of the world in terms of the meanings they have attributed to them. Third, they assume that understanding the environment depends upon language, and that understanding the environment cannot take place until some type of language has developed. Fourth, they assume that symbols emerge from human interaction and form the basis of overt behavior. They believe man defines a situation in terms of his symbols, and responds not to the objective stimulus in the environment but to the symbolic interpretation of the stimulus (Lauer

Handel, 1977). Thus, in this framework, the investigator is required to see the world from the point of view of the individual he or she is investigating (Stryker, 1959).

To the symbolic interactionist, the self originates when the child collects and internalizes the evaluations he or she receives from significant others in his or her environment -- especially from parental figures. As a child grows older, his or her peers begin to provide evaluations which are also gathered and added to the child's self concept. According to Mead (1934), a person can possess as many selves as there are numbers of social groups in which he or she participates. As a person grows older, the process of evaluating him- or herself based on what he or she perceives to be the appraisals of significant others in the social group in which he or she participates continues, and although resistant to change the self-concept is continually changing based on new perceptions (Rosenberg and Pearlin, 1978; Goodstein and Doller, 1978; Zurcher, 1977).

Prior to Mead, William James (1890) postulated that there are at least two selves: an "I" and a "Me." The "I" being the conscious, active, self, while the "Me" is the self as an object as the "I" perceives it. The "Me" he divided into a material "Me," a social "Me," and a spiritual "Me." James considered the material "Me" to include one's physical body, one's clothes, and all of one's other material possessions. He considered the social "Me" to include all the recognition one gets from his fellow men. He considered the spiritual "Me" to be a higher level of self as object -- perhaps the conscious inner self

which is left when all the other aspects of self as object are considered external possessions.

James divided the three "Me's" into a hierarchy. He stated,

A tolerably unanimous opinion ranges the different selves of which a man may be "seized and possessed," and the consequent different orders of his self-regard, in an hierarchical scale, with the bodily Self at the bottom, the spiritual Self at top, and the extracorporeal material selves and the various social selves between. (James, 1952, p. 202)

James thought that self-esteem, or self-feeling, was determined by the "ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the numerator our success; thus, Self-esteem =  $\frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$ . Such a fraction may be increased as well by diminishing the denominator as by increasing the numerator (James, 1952, p. 200)." Of particular interest to James was the potential social self and its connection to the moral and religious life. His thought was that whereas most men seek the praise and honor of the significant others in their society, a few men brave condemnation for motives of honor or conscience, and go on in pursuit of an ideal social self worthy of recognition by a higher or ultimate judge. These few courageous men might exhibit high self-esteem in spite of the negative evaluations of most others.

Symbolic interactionists are concerned primarily with the self as James' "social Me." Goodstein and Doller wrote:

It would appear that there are three different aspects of the self as an object or product: (1) identity, or how the person perceives him- or herself; (2) self-evaluation, or what the person thinks of him- or herself; and (3) self-esteem, or the subjective way in which the person values him- or herself. (Goodstein and Doller, 1978, p. 446)

The first aspect, identity, often refers to the role a person sees him- or herself filling in a given social group -- I am a Mormon; I am a housewife. The second aspect, self-evaluation, refers to one's evaluation of particular attributes of oneself -- I am a faithful Mormon; I am an excellent housekeeper. The third aspect, self-esteem, refers to the global feelings or subjective feelings of self-regard or self-worth which a person feels about him- or herself. Self-esteem is different from the sum of the evaluations of the various self-concept attributes possessed by a person because different attributes have varying degrees of importance to the person. Rosenberg stated "...a person's global self-esteem is based not solely on an assessment of his constituent qualities but on an assessment of the qualities that count (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 18)."

In investigating a person's self-esteem, then, the important thing is to find out how that person sees the world in terms of his or her unique viewpoint of what attitudes are valued and whose appraisal is significant. Rosenberg stated: "...not all significant others are equally significant, and those who are more significant have greater influences on our self (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 83)." Along these same lines, Ziller (1973) has theorized that a person with high self-esteem maintains a conceptual buffer which he or she uses to evaluate and filter out those negative appraisals of others. He maintains that a person with low self-esteem lacks this conceptual buffer, and hence is vulnerable to the negative evaluations of practically all others concerning almost any attribute.

According to Rosenberg (1979) there are four general principles in the formation and maintenance of self-esteem which underlie the influence of all independent variables upon self-esteem: (1) the reflected appraisals of others, (2) social comparisons, (3) self-attribution, and (4) psychological centrality. Reflected appraisals of others, or the way a person perceives others as judging him- or herself in an attribute or as a person, influences self-esteem if that attribute is valued and those judges are deemed significant. Social comparisons, or the way we rate or group ourselves with others, influences a person's self-esteem. Self-attribution, or a person's evaluation of him- or herself in a certain attribute influences self-esteem. Finally, psychological centrality, or how valued an attribute or an appraiser is influences a person's self-esteem.

In the symbolic interactional framework, a person's self-concept and a person's self-esteem depend entirely on the way a person perceives him- or herself. It is a subjective viewpoint. A person responds to his or her symbolic interpretation of the appraisals of significant others and to his or her symbolic interpretation of his or her own performance or standing. Returning to James' equation, self-esteem equals the ratio of success to pretensions (James, 1952), success is either a subjective interpretation of the appraisals of others, or a subjective self-appraisal, or both.

A person with high self-esteem tends to maintain his or her high self-esteem by selecting positive appraisals by which to judge his or her success, and by quickly discounting or filtering out negative appraisals. Likewise, the person with high self-esteem tends to keep

his or her pretensions realistic; and, hence, perceives more of his or her performances as successful. On the other hand, the person with low self-esteem tends to maintain his or her low self-esteem by having unrealistically high pretensions; and hence, perceives few if any of his or her performances as successful. Performances which others might judge as successes, he or she perceives as failures.

### Rationale and Hypotheses

Alberti and Emmons (1978) and Fensterheim (1975) argued that assertiveness and self-esteem are positively correlated. They theorized that the assertive woman is more successful in her interpersonal relationships, and thereby receives more positive feedback from others resulting in enhanced self-esteem.

This theory meshes with Rosenberg's theory of self-esteem development (1979) that assertive behavior almost by definition should result in successful interpersonal behavior which, in turn, should result in a person being judged competent in those attributes involving assertive behavior. Assertive behavior, then, might result in the following self-evaluations: (1) the perception of significant others esteeming her behavior positively, (2) the perception of being as good as others, (3) the perception of being good or skilled in a particular attribute, and (4) the perception of the successful behavior occupying a more central position among her valued attributes.

Possible problems, however, might occur if one of the following conditions exists: (1) if neither the assertive behavior nor the others involved in the transaction are deemed of value by the woman,

(2) if the woman's self-esteem is so low that her assertive behavior is perceived by her as being unsuccessful, and (3) if the culture or sub-culture in which she lives defines her assertive behavior as non-assertive or aggressive. The first problem stems back to what James (1952) was discussing when he wrote about the potential social self. It is possible that a woman who lacks social skills which would be of potential help in advancing herself in the world of work may value neither these skills nor those people in her day-to-day world who are judging her on these skills. She may, therefore, score low on most assertiveness tests, and still have adequate self-esteem because she feels herself judged as worthwhile by one or two higher judges, or because she feels herself competent at other non-social skills which have a high value to her.

The second problem is not one of present values but one of past defeats. The woman with this problem has perceived herself as never being able to measure up to her pretensions and, subsequently, her self-esteem is so low that even assertive behavior would be judged by her as unassertive. In this case some type of cognitive restructuring would probably have to precede any successful assertiveness training (Montgomery and Heimberg, 1978).

The third problem relates both to roles and to cultural expectations. Different cultures define assertive behavior differently than other cultures. For example, Cheek (1976) wrote that the black culture in the United States defines assertive behavior differently than the white culture. A behavior by a black termed assertive by blacks might be termed aggressive by whites. Likewise, a behavior termed assertive for a man might be termed aggressive if a woman did it.

With these problems in mind, this researcher wanted to explore the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem in a sample of Mormon women, members of a subculture advocating the traditional sex-role for women, and that "faith, fortitude, denial, selflessness, and good service" increase their self-esteem (Kimball, 1978); and advocating a less assertive role for women. Two things, then, make the Mormon women interesting subjects to study: (1) they belong to a subculture which believes in the traditional role for women, and (2) they espouse a value system in which a higher judge, God, is perceived as a significant other who is evaluating them for such other-world attributes as denial and selflessness. Based upon the possibility that for the Mormon women self-esteem would be less positively correlated with assertiveness due to their church's advocacy of the traditional woman's sex-role, the following hypotheses were proposed: (1) that the mean scores for the sample of Mormon women would be significantly lower than the mean scores for the sample of non-Mormon women as measured by the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule; (2) that the mean scores for the sample of Mormon women would not be significantly different from the mean scores for the sample of non-Mormon women as measured by the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale; and (3) that the correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem would be significantly higher for the non-Mormon sample than for the Mormon sample. For statistical purposes, these three hypotheses were tested in the null form.

Hypotheses (stated in the null form)

1. Hypothesis<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean



scores for the sample of Mormon women and the sample of non-Mormon women as measured by the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (expected result would be higher for the non-Mormon sample).

2. Hypothesis<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference for the mean scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale between the sample of Mormon women and the sample of non-Mormon women (expected result would be to accept the null hypothesis).
3. Hypothesis<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference for the correlation of the scores for the non-Mormon sample on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the correlation of the scores for the Mormon sample on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (expected result would be a more positive correlation for the non-Mormon sample).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first work on assertiveness and assertiveness training was done by Salter (1949). He viewed assertiveness as a trait present in normal individuals, and lack of assertiveness as a trait comparable to inhibition. Wolpe (1958), who introduced the term "assertive," based his concept on Salter's work. However, Wolpe and Lazarus (1966) differed from Salter's original view in that they concluded that lack of assertiveness could result from purely behavioral skill deficits rather than a generalized trait. This issue has yet to be resolved (Rich and Schroeder, 1976).

Alberti and Emmons (1978) theorized that there might be two kinds of non-assertiveness; the first category being non-assertiveness which occurs only in certain situations to typically assertive individuals. The second category is non-assertiveness which occurs under nearly any social situation. The first, they termed situational non-assertiveness; the second, they termed generalized non-assertiveness. Two of the characteristics of non-assertiveness are lack of social skills and anxiety.

Alberti and Emmons stated:

Research has shown that learning to make assertive responses will inhibit or weaken the anxiety previously experienced in specific interpersonal relationships. Developing the ability to stand up for yourself and do things on your own initiative can reduce appreciably anxiety or tenseness in key situations, and increase your sense of worth as a person. This same sense of worth is often lacking in the person who uses aggressiveness to mask self-doubts and guilt. (Alberti and Emmons, 1978, p. 2)

In other words, by learning assertive behavior, a person can increase his or her comfort and satisfaction in interpersonal situations, and can increase his or her self-esteem.

To test the Alberti and Emmons hypothesis, Percell, Berwick, and Beigel (1974) administered both an assertiveness scale and a self-esteem questionnaire to 50 men and 50 women in a community mental health setting. The mean age of the sample was 29.4 years. A modified form of the Lawrence Interpersonal Behavior Test (IBT), an assertive measure; the Self-Acceptance (SA) Scale of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI); and the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (TMAS) were administered to the sample. They found positive Pearson product-moment correlations between the IBT and the SA Scale of the CPI of .49 for the men ( $p < .001$ ) and .51 for the women ( $p < .001$ ), and negative correlations between the IBT and the TMAS of  $-.04$  for the men ( $p < .4$ ) and  $-.88$  for the women ( $p < .001$ ). These data suggest a significant positive relationship between assertiveness as measured by the IBT and self-acceptance as measured by the SA Scale of the CPI.

In a followup study, Percell, Berwick, and Beigel (1974) tested a hypothesis that, after assertive training, clients would exhibit a significant increase on a self-acceptance measure and a significant decrease on an anxiety measure. To test these hypotheses, the IBT, the Breger Self-Acceptance (SA) Scale, and the TMAS were administered to seven male and five female psychiatric outpatients, with a mean age of 28.3 years, before and after eight sessions of group assertive training, and to five male and seven female psychiatric outpatients,

with a mean age of 28.8 years, before and after eight sessions of a relationship-control therapy group.

Mixed analyses of variance revealed significant treatment effects on the IBT ( $F=13.72$ ;  $df=1,22$ ;  $p < .01$ ), the Breger SA Scale ( $F=14.35$ ;  $df=1,22$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and the TMAS ( $F=7.75$ ;  $df=1,22$ ;  $p < .025$ ). A behavioral rating scale, scored by blind interviewers, was also used to assess changes in assertive behavior. In contrast to controls, assertive group subjects after training were rated significantly more assertive, emphatic, spontaneous, outgoing, and less anxious ( $p < .05$  for each comparison). The results supported their hypothesis that after assertive training, clients would show a significant increase on the Breger SA Scale and a significant decrease on the TMAS, with controls showing no significant changes. Likewise, Osborn and Harris (1975) report that they have found positive changes in self-esteem after assertiveness training (as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale). However, Osborn and Harris provide no research references to support these contentions.

Sisson (1977), using 32 college freshmen and sophomores randomly selected into two groups of 16 each, found that the group receiving 15 hours of assertion training showed a significant increase in assertiveness as measured by the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule ( $F=57.826$ ;  $df=1, 29$ ;  $p < .001$ ) compared to the control group. Also, the experimental group showed a significant increase in self-esteem as measured by the Total Positive Score on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (counseling form) ( $F=14.523$ ;  $df=1,29$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Sisson found no significant difference by sex on either of the two measures. Each group contained ten

females and six males, with an age range of from 18 to 21 years. All the participants were single students at Oregon State University.

Williams (1976) conducted a similar experiment with a group of older students (average age 28.37 years, range 22-45 years for the experimental group and average age 29.06 years, range 21-50 years for the control group) at North Texas State University. Volunteers were randomly assigned to an experimental group and to a control group. The experimental group, composed of ten females and six males, received eight weeks of assertive training, while the control group, composed of eleven females and five males, received a placebo training. Contrary to Sisson's findings, Williams' experimental group did not show a significant increase in assertiveness as measured by the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule ( $F=0.1011$ ;  $df=1,29$ ;  $p < 0.7527$ ) compared to the control group. Likewise, Williams' experimental group did not show a significant increase in self-esteem as measured by the Total Positive Score on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (counseling form) ( $F=0.0134$ ;  $df=1,29$ ;  $p < 0.9086$ ) compared to the control group.

In a recent study, Pachman and Foy (1978) used 55 male alcoholics to investigate the relationships between (1) depression and assertiveness, (2) anxiety and assertiveness, (3) self-esteem and depression, (4) depression and anxiety, and (5) self-esteem and assertiveness. Although they found significant negative correlations between depression and self-esteem ( $r=-.38$   $p < 0.01$ ), depression and assertiveness ( $r=-.26$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and anxiety and assertiveness ( $r=-.31$ ,  $p < 0.02$ ), they found no significant relationship between self-esteem as measured by Barksdale's Self-Esteem Index and assertiveness as measured by a modified version of the Behavioral Assertiveness Test. The mean age of this group was 46 years.

Engel and Simons (1978) studied the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem among patients at a psychiatric clinic in Heidelberg, Germany. The 22 patients studied were all ready for discharge. There were 5 women and 17 men with an average age of 25.6 years (range 15-47 years). Fourteen were non-students, and eight were students. Eighteen were neurotics and four were psychotics. Engel and Simons followed Carl Rogers in defining self-esteem as the correlation between real self-concept and ideal self-concept. They considered the relationship to be not linear but curvilinear, with disturbance being indicated by either a very high or a very low correlation. Their hypotheses were: (1) self-esteem of the group will be higher after assertiveness training, and (2) real self-concept will change more than ideal self-concept, which will remain relatively stable. The results supported their hypotheses. The average self-esteem of the group increased from  $r=.12$  to  $r=.38$  following the assertiveness training. This difference was significant ( $t=3.15$ ,  $df=21$ ,  $p < .01$ ). For the second hypothesis, the correlation of the means of the ideal self-concepts was  $r=.55$ , while the correlation of the means of the real self-concepts was  $r=.40$ . The difference between these two coefficients was significant at the .05 level ( $t=2.12$ ,  $df=21$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Johnson (1976) studied the relationship of six variables to assertiveness: (1) trait anxiety as measured by Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Index, (2) a factor from Gough's California Psychological Inventory (CPI) which she termed Interpersonal Adequacy consisting of the CPI scales: dominance, capacity for status, social presence and self-acceptance, (3) the CPI scale sense of well-being, (4) the CPI

scale femininity, (5) a values factor from Rokeach's Value Survey named Self-constriction vs. Self-expansion, and consisting of the values obedient, polite, self-controlled and honest vs. broad-minded and courageous, and (6) a second value factor named Inner- vs. Other-minded which consisted of the values independent and courageous vs. polite. She ran correlational analysis and multiple linear regression between these six factors and assertiveness as measured by Gay's Adult Self Expression Scale on two samples: one consisting of 93 women from a beginning psychology course at Ohio State University, and the other consisting of 96 women who were members of a large Protestant church in Columbus, Ohio.

Johnson found the older ( $M=32.9$  years) and more educated ( $M=16.1$  years) church women scoring significantly higher on assertiveness ( $M=124.96$ ,  $S.D.=20.15$ ) than the college women ( $M=115.07$ ,  $S.D.=22.93$ ) with  $p=.025$  on the t-test. Both the correlational analysis and the multiple linear regression on the student data showed that the CPI Interpersonal Adequacy factor ( $r=.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ), the CPI sense of well-being scale ( $r=.32$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the Inner-minded (Independent and courageous) value factor ( $r=.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were all positively correlated to level of assertiveness. Trait anxiety was significantly and negatively correlated with assertiveness ( $r=-.55$ ,  $p < .05$ ). By both statistical techniques, Interpersonal Adequacy and trait anxiety were the two best predictors of assertiveness. At the positive pole Interpersonal Adequacy was  $df=6,83$ ;  $F=27.38$ ;  $p < .001$ , and trait anxiety was  $df=6,83$ ;  $F=9.58$ ;  $p < .001$ . At the negative pole Interpersonal Adequacy was  $df=6,83$ ;  $F=31.01$ ;  $p < .001$ , trait anxiety was  $df=6,83$ ;  $F=13.26$ ;  $p < .001$ ,

and sense of well-being was  $df=6,83$ ;  $F=4.52$ ;  $p < .05$ . For the student group, the variable femininity showed no significant correlation with assertiveness.

For the non-students, or the community women, all correlations were significant except the Self-constriction vs. Self-expansion value factor. The highest correlation was between Interpersonal Adequacy and assertiveness ( $r=.61$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The next highest correlation was between the Inner-minded (independent and courageous) value factor and assertiveness ( $r=.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Bipolar Value 2 consisted of three values: courageous (standing up for one's beliefs), and independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient) vs. polite (courteous, well-mannered). The positive pole (courageous and independent) was correlated  $r=-.42$ ,  $p < .05$  (a negative correlation indicated a positive covariance) and accounted for approximately 17 percent of the variance. The negative pole was correlated  $r=.34$ ,  $p < .05$ . Johnson writes that "from these correlations, it might be concluded that at least to a certain degree assertive women in the non-student population can be said to value the act of standing up for and clearly stating their own beliefs and are not apt to forego that right even if it sets them apart from others in the group." (Johnson, 1976, p. 55)

The third best predictor of assertiveness was trait anxiety which correlated negatively with assertiveness ( $r=.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ). For the community women both the CPI femininity score ( $r=-.28$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the Other-minded (polite) value factor covaried negatively with assertiveness ( $r=.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ).



In summary, then, from Johnson's study of both students and community women, the most important predictor for level of assertiveness was the personality characteristic Interpersonal Adequacy (CPI scales dominance, capacity for status, sociability and self-acceptance). From this one would be tempted to infer that women who are high in assertiveness would have adequate levels of self-esteem.

Henderson (1975) at the University of Northern Colorado studied the effects of assertiveness training on self-actualization in women. Using five assertiveness training groups with seven or eight individuals in a group (N=38), she compared the five experimental groups with a control group (N=38). All of the women were beyond the lower division levels and in an age range of 23-62. Using the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), she found significant differences for seven of the twelve major scales. These seven scales were: Self-Actualizing Values, Existentiality, Feeling Reactivity, Self Regard, Self Acceptance, Nature of Man, and Synergy. She used a pre- post test design, and an analysis of covariance. To measure the level of assertiveness she used a modified Assertive Inventory (Alberti and Emmons). Compared to the control group, the experimental groups increased significantly in self-esteem (the scales of self regard and self acceptance). Self Regard was defined as the ability to like one's self because of one's strengths as a person, and Self Acceptance was defined as the ability to accept one's self despite one's weaknesses. The result of the analysis of covariance for the self regard scale was .0015,  $F=1.51$ ,  $p < .05$ , and for the self acceptance scale it was .0086,  $F=1.45$ ,  $p < .05$ .

In conclusion, then, Percell et al. (1974), Osborn and Harris (1975), Henderson (1975), Sisson (1977), and Engel and Simons (1978) all found significant positive changes in self-esteem following assertive training, while Williams (1976) and Pachman and Foy (1978) did not. Johnson investigating the antecedents of assertiveness found evidence that adequate self-esteem is an ingredient in assertive behavior (Johnson, 1976). The literature, then, does not consistently support Alberti and Emmon's theory that an assertive individual is more likely to feel positive about herself. It would appear from Johnson's study that there is a positive correlation between the two variables, however, there is still doubt whether such a well-established personality trait as self-esteem can be increased by assertiveness training.

#### Measurement of Assertiveness

Only recently have standardized self-report inventories been developed to assess assertiveness. The early instruments were unstandardized (Alberti and Emmons, 1978; Wolpe, 1969; Wolpe and Lazarus, 1966). Currently, there are at least six standardized instruments. The first two were developed in 1971 by Bates and Zimmerman and by McFall and Lillesand. The Bates and Zimmerman scale, called the Constriction Scale, uses a forced choice format to determine whether respondents engage in a series of 43 behaviors (Bates and Zimmerman, 1971). The McFall and Lillesand scale, called the Conflict Resolution Inventory, uses 35 items tailored for college students and deals with turning down unreasonable requests.

In 1973, Rathus developed the widely used Rathus Assertiveness Schedule, a 30-item schedule based partly on questions developed by

Wolpe and Lazarus (1966). The following year, 1974, Galassi, DeLo, Galassi, and Bastien developed the College Self-Expression Scale, a 50-item schedule designed to measure assertiveness in college students across a wide range of situations. It, too, was based partly on questions developed by Wolpe and Lazarus (1966).

Then, in 1975, two more schedules were developed: The Assertion Inventory and the Adult Self Expression Scale. The Assertion Inventory was developed by Gambrill and Ritchey to permit respondents to note their degree of discomfort, their probability of engaging in the behavior, and situations they would like to handle more assertively (Gambrill and Ritchey, 1975). It includes 40 items. The Adult Self Expression Scale was developed by Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi as a 48-item schedule to specifically measure assertive behavior in adults (as opposed to college students) across a wide range of both interpersonal and assertive behaviors (Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi, 1975).

All six of these instruments have shown moderate to strong reliability and validity when used with the populations for which they were designed. Tests on adults using both the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Adult Self Expression Scale indicate that assertion correlated positively with social dominance and negatively with abasement (Hollandsworth, Galassi and Gay, 1977). When both scales were administered to 64 convicted male felons from Central Prison, Raleigh, North Carolina, a significant convergent validity ( $r=.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was found. It appears that either of these scales can be used with a sample of adults.

### Measurement of Self-Esteem

A number of self-report schedules exist which have been used to measure self-esteem (Wells, 1976; Wylie, 1967; Wylie, 1974). Two of the more widely used ones are the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale developed by William Fitts, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale is a multidimensional measure of self-concept with the total positive score indicating self-esteem. It contains 100 items, and does not make for simple answering or scoring. It is best used in a clinical or counseling situation. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, on the other hand, was designed for survey research. It is unidimensional, and contains only 10 items. Drawing heavily on Cooley's (1922) idea of the "looking glass self," Rosenberg conceives of the self-image as an attitude toward an object.

Rosenberg writes:

Self-esteem...is a positive or negative attitude toward a particular object, namely, the self. But self-esteem has two quite different connotations. One connotation of high self-esteem is that the person thinks he is "very good"; a very different connotation is that he thinks he is "good enough." It is possible for a person to consider himself superior to most others but to feel inadequate in terms of certain standards he has set for himself....

High self-esteem, as reflected in our scale items, expresses the feeling that one is "good enough." The individual simply feels that he is a person of worth; he respects himself for what he is, but he does not stand in awe of himself nor does he expect others to stand in awe of him. He does not necessarily consider himself superior to others....

Low self-esteem, on the other hand, implies self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, self-contempt. The individual lacks respect for the self he observes. The self-picture is disagreeable, and he wishes it were otherwise. (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 30-31)

Rosenberg, then, visualizes self-esteem as a unidimensional variable which could be used to rank people along a single continuum. The ceiling of the continuum, however, is not "excellent" or "very good" but simply "good enough."

Wylie comments on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as follows:

All things considered, it seems that this scale deserves more research, development, and application. One merit of its brief, direct approach is that it does not assume that a group of items with heterogeneous content, chosen by E, and of variable and unknown salience to Ss may be summed to indicate global self-regard. (Wylie, 1974, p. 189)

Although, Rosenberg designed his scale to be used with adolescents, it has been found suitable for use with adults (Robinson and Shaver, 1970; Kaplan and Pokorny, 1969, 1970, 1971; Myhill and Lorr, 1978).

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Selection of Subjects

This research required that a sample of non-Mormon women be tested and compared to a sample of Mormon women. To do this a survey method with mailed questionnaires was used. The sample of non-Mormon women was drawn by selecting pages from the 1979 Roanoke-Salem-Vinton, Virginia telephone directory with the aid of a table of random numbers, and then randomly selecting one name per page. This resulted in a potential mailing list of 500 non-Mormon women from the Roanoke-Salem area of Virginia.

Since the telephone directory does not indicate religion, the sample of Mormon women had to be gathered by a different method. This method consisted of comparing the membership rosters of three Mormon congregations in the Roanoke-Salem area with listings in the telephone directory. The membership rosters proved to contain the names of many women who had moved from the area or whose current addresses were unknown; however, by this matching process a mailing list of 250 Mormon women was obtained.

#### Data Collection

Both samples were mailed a letter explaining the nature of the study and soliciting participation. Those desiring to participate were asked to return a post card with a check in the box indicating their willingness to answer the forthcoming questionnaires. Rights of privacy

were detailed and all respondents were assured of complete anonymity. Those who returned the postcards and indicated a desire to participate were sent a packet containing the questionnaires and a cover letter with instructions (see Appendix).

This method resulted in the mailing of 239 packets. From the original mailing of 500 letters to the non-Mormon women, 131, or 26.2 percent, requested packets. From the 250 letters sent to the Mormon women, 108, or 43.2 percent requested packets.

Three weeks after the packets were distributed, a follow-up letter was mailed containing another copy of the questionnaires and urging the women to return it as soon as possible (see Appendix A). As a result, the non-Mormon women returned 110 questionnaires of which eight were incomplete and could not be used. Also, since there were only two completed questionnaires from Black women and none in the Mormon sample, these two questionnaires were removed resulting in a final sample of 100 completed questionnaires. The Mormon women returned 105 questionnaires; however, five were incomplete and could not be used which resulted in a final sample of 100 completed questionnaires.

### Instruments

The mailed packets each contained three instruments. The first instrument was a general information questionnaire containing ten questions concerning socioeconomic status, occupational status, and general demographic information (see Appendix A).

The second instrument was the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a ten-item Guttman scale. The reproducibility of this

scale is 93 percent, and its scalability is 72 percent (Rosenberg, 1964). Each item was rated on a 6-point answer scale (note: this instrument is usually rated on a four-point answer scale) and the respondent indicated how closely the item corresponded to herself. The scale ranged from -3 (very uncharacteristic) to +3 (very characteristic). All items had been dichotomized so the respondent was scored merely on whether or not the statement is characteristic of her. Three contrived items were utilized in the development of the scale so that the responses to questions 3, 7 and 9 counted as only one item; the responses to questions 2 and 6 counted as only one item; and the responses to questions 4 and 5 counted as only one item. So instead of the questionnaire having an 11-point scale, it has only a 7-point scale with a range of 0 (high self-esteem) to 6 (low self-esteem). Positive responses to two or more questions on the first contrived item counted as a low self-esteem score, while a positive response on either of the other two contrived items counted as a low self-esteem score in each case.<sup>1</sup>

Rosenberg (1965) considers scores of 0 and 1 as indicating high or adequate self-esteem, a score of 2 as indicating medium self-esteem, and scores of 3 to 6 as indicating low or less than adequate self-esteem. Thus, the scale is not a linear scale measuring a continuum of self-esteem but rather a scale which gives an indication of whether or not a person's level of self-esteem is at an adequate condition.

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<sup>1</sup>The purpose of using contrived items in a Guttman scale is to improve the ranking of individuals through reduction of scale error (Stouffer et al., 1952).



The third instrument was the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Rathus, 1973), a widely used instrument of 30 items with each item rated on a 6-point scale. Unlike the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule is a linear scale with a range from -3 (very uncharacteristic) to +3 (very characteristic) with a range of possible scores from -90 (extremely unassertive) to +90 (extremely assertive). The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule has a test-retest reliability of  $r=.78$ ,  $p < .01$ , a split-half reliability of  $r=.77$ ,  $p < .01$ , and a concurrent validity of  $r=.70$ ,  $p < .01$  (Rathus, 1973).

#### Data Analysis

The questionnaires were hand scored, and the incomplete ones were eliminated. The tabulated data were then analyzed by the computer at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, utilizing the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). Pearson correlations and a series of t-tests were run on all the numeric variables, and frequency counts were run on all variables.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Description of the Sample

Both the Mormon and the non-Mormon samples were limited to white females over 18 years of age. Ninety percent of the Mormon sample were married, and 79 percent of the non-Mormon sample were married. Four percent of the Mormon sample were widows, and nine percent of the non-Mormon sample were widows. Four percent of the Mormons were divorced or separated, and eight percent of the non-Mormons were divorced or separated.

The non-Mormons were 85 percent Protestant, six percent Catholic, five percent other, three percent no religion, and one percent Jewish. The Mormons were considered Mormon by virtue of their names being on church membership rosters. No attempt was made to measure their religiosity.

Of the Mormons, 59 percent did not work outside of the home, and of the 41 percent who did work outside of the home, only 24 percent worked full-time. Of the non-Mormons, 45 percent did not work outside of the home, and of the 55 percent who did work outside of the home only 39 percent worked full-time. Of the Mormons who worked, 10 percent worked as supervisors or independently, and of the non-Mormons who worked 15 percent worked as supervisors or independently.

The average age range of the Mormons and the non-Mormons was between 30 and 49 years. The average Mormon was younger than the average non-Mormon but not significantly (Mormons  $M=2.49$ , non-Mormons  $M=2.79$ ,  $p < .13$ ).

The Mormons were slightly less educated than the non-Mormons but the difference was not significant (Mormons  $M=3.76$ , non-Mormons  $M=4.07$ ,  $p < .08$ ). Of the Mormons, 22 percent had graduated from college as compared with 31 percent of the non-Mormons.

Both groups had similar incomes. The average of both groups was middle class. Comparing the Mormons who worked with the non-Mormons who worked, the Mormons were slightly less satisfied with their jobs; however, the difference was not significant (Mormons  $M=1.53$ , non-Mormons  $M=1.90$ ,  $p < .17$ ).

As might be expected from their pronatalistic stance, the Mormons had significantly more children than the non-Mormons. The mean number of children for the Mormons was 1.62 with a range of from 0 to 7, while the mean number of children for the non-Mormons was .70 with a range of from 0 to 3. This difference was significant at the .0001 level using a doubled-tailed t-test. For a summary of the results see Table I.

### Tests of Hypotheses

The first hypothesis that there is no significant difference for the mean scores between the sample of Mormon women and the sample of non-Mormon women as measured by the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule was accepted. A t-test (one-tailed) did not reach a significant level (Mormons  $M=1.01$ ,  $S.D.=26.16$ ; non-Mormons  $M=5.36$ ,  $S.D.=26.35$ ,  $p < .12$ ). Since this was contrary to the expected result, the researcher broke the samples down into working mothers and housewife mothers (see Table II), still the differences between the Mormons and the non-Mormons were not significant. Comparing working mothers to housewife mothers, in both

Table I

## Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Mormons	Non-Mormons
<u>Marital status</u>		
single	2%	4%
married	90%	79%
divorced or separated	4%	8%
widowed	4%	9%
<u>Age</u>		
18-29	24%	28%
30-39	34%	21%
40-49	19%	16%
50-59	17%	19%
60 and over	6%	16%
<u>Number of children under 18</u>		
0	29%	58%
1	25%	18%
2	20%	20%
3	14%	4%
4 and over	12%	0%
<u>Educational level</u>		
less than high school graduate	8%	4%
high school graduate	34%	38%
some college	34%	27%
college graduate	14%	17%
post-graduate work	8%	14%
<u>Income level of family</u>		
under \$10,000 per year	19%	19%
\$10,000 to 19,999 per year	40%	41%
\$20,000 to 29,999 per year	26%	18%
\$30,000 to 39,999 per year	9%	10%
\$40,000 or more per year	5%	11%
<u>Working for pay outside the home</u>		
Not working	59%	45%
Working full-time	24%	39%
Working part-time	17%	16%

Table I (continued)

Characteristic	Mormons	Non-Mormons
<u>Job type</u>		
Not working	59%	45%
Independent	8%	7%
Supervise others	2%	8%
Work under supervision	30%	40%
<u>Job satisfaction</u>		
Not working	59%	45%
Extremely satisfied	4%	8%
Very satisfied	12%	18%
Satisfied	16%	26%
Not satisfied	9%	2%
Extremely dissatisfied	0%	1%

Table II  
Levels of Assertiveness for the  
Working Mothers and the Housewife Mothers

(Sample(N))	Mean	Standard Deviation
<u>Mormons</u>		
Working mothers (19)	6.11	18.32
Housewife mothers (47)	-6.77	27.63
<u>Non-Mormons</u>		
Working mothers (14)	3.86	23.67
Housewife mothers (25)	0.96	28.62

samples the working mothers were more assertive than the housewife mothers, and for the Mormons the difference was significant (working mothers  $M=6.11$ ,  $S.D.=18.32$ ,  $t=2.210$ ,  $p < .05$ , two-tailed).

Although the Mormons were lower in assertiveness than the non-Mormons as a group, the Mormon working mothers were the most assertive of all the working mothers. Perhaps the Mormon working mothers were higher in assertiveness because only the more assertive Mormon mothers would work in spite of the opposition of their church; or, perhaps, mothers who work are more assertive than mothers who do not work. In either case, the lack of a significant difference in the mean scores between the Mormon sample and the non-Mormon sample did not support the anticipated result that the Mormons because of their advocacy of the traditional sex-role for women which includes the attributes of denial and selflessness would be less assertive (Kimball, 1978).

The second hypothesis that there is no significant difference for the mean scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale between the sample of Mormon women and the sample of non-Mormon women was also accepted. This was the expected result, and is consistent with the writings of Kimball (1978), Smith (1976), and Tanner (1974) that the traditional sex-role as upheld by the Mormons can offer them an opportunity to develop adequate self-esteem. Likewise, these results support the theory of Rosenberg (1979) that it is the perceived importance of the role and one's perceived success in the role that contributes to a feeling of adequate self-esteem rather than the role itself. These results contradict the writings of Jakubowski (1977), Westerwelt (1978),

and Scarf (1979) who state that the traditional sex-role is largely responsible for the low self-esteem of American women.

These results were obtained using a Chi-square test of differences due to the cluster of scores at the high self-esteem end of the scale (low scores indicate high self-esteem). The Chi-square resulted in  $\chi^2 = 3.78$ , short of the 7.81 needed for significance at the .05 level. Consequently, there were no grounds for rejecting the hypothesis of independence between the Mormon/non-Mormon variable and the level of self-esteem (see Table III).

The third hypothesis that there is no significant difference for the correlation of the scores for the non-Mormon sample on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the correlation of the scores for the Mormon sample on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was rejected. Although both the Mormons and the non-Mormons showed a significant correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem at the .0001 level of significance, the Fisher's  $z_r$  transformation showed a significant difference between the two correlations at the .05 level using a one-sided test (see Table IV).

The results showed a strong correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem for both samples, and support the findings of Percell, Berwick, and Beigel (1974), Osborn and Harris (1975), Sisson (1977), Engel and Simons (1978), and Henderson (1975) that there is a significant positive correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem. These results, then, contradict the findings of Williams (1976) and Pachman and Foy (1978) that there is no significant correlation between the two variables.



Table III  
Level of Self-Esteem

Sample	high	medium	low
Mormons	87%	9%	4%
Non-Mormons	81%	9%	10%

Table IV  
Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between  
Self-Esteem Scores and Assertiveness Scores

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Mormons	0.38371
Non-Mormons	0.58928
Fisher's $z_r$	1.895

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critical  $z = 1.65$  at the 0.05 level of significance

The finding of a significantly weaker correlation between the two variables for the Mormon sample is consistent with the writings of Kimball (1978) that success in the traditional sex-role as practiced by the Mormon women would require more denial and selflessness and perhaps a lower level of assertiveness.

### Limitations

The present study had a number of limitations. First, the methods of selecting the two samples were not identical, and therefore some bias may have entered in. In addition, although care was taken with the Mormon sample so as not to let them know they were under study, the leaders of the congregations had to give permission in order for this researcher to use their membership rosters, and there is the possibility of bias if any of the respondents found out they were under study.

Also, since the official stance of the Mormon Church is in opposition to the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, Mormon women may be sensitized to an interest in issues affecting women more than women in general. Although, some bias may possibly have entered in because of the sensitivity of the issue, at no time in this study was assertiveness explicitly identified as one of the variables. If it had been used, the negative connotations of the term would have biased the Mormon women's response.

A major problem with this study was the measurement of self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a widely used instrument for measuring whether or not a person's level of self-esteem is adequate, however, it does not give a linear measure of self-esteem, and does not lend itself to statistical techniques because scores tend to clump at the positive end of the scale.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

Leaders of the women's movement have emphasized that the traditional female sex role is demeaning and promotes low self-esteem (Jakubowski, 1977; Westervelt, 1978; Scarf, 1979). Leaders of the Mormon Church have countered this by stating that the traditional female sex role is uplifting and offers women the highest opportunity to develop adequate self-esteem (Kimball, 1977; Smith, 1976; Tanner, 1974). Leaders of the women's movement have encouraged women to become more assertive so they can better compete with men for power, prestige, and money in the world of work. Their rationale being that assertiveness will lead to success, which in turn, will enhance self-esteem. Mormon leaders have not advocated assertiveness training as a tool to help women become more successful in the traditional role. Their rationale being that success in the traditional role comes from "faith, fortitude, denial, selflessness, and good service"; and that the development of the appropriate expression of rights and feelings is not a primary problem.

A number of theorists as well as leaders in the women's movement have stated that assertiveness training can enhance self-esteem (Alberti and Emmons, 1978; Fensterheim, 1975; Osborn and Harris, 1975). The results of empirical research have been inconclusive. For this reason, the present study sought to determine the existence and the nature of the relationship between level of assertiveness and level of self-esteem in samples of Mormon and non-Mormon women. The justification being that

high self-esteem is an important attribute for women to possess no matter what their role, and if assertiveness and self-esteem are positively correlated, then assertiveness training may be one method by which women can increase their level of self-esteem.

The theoretical framework used in this study was symbolic interactionism. Self-esteem for women was defined using this framework as the subjective feeling about oneself which results from the perceptions one has about one's degree of success in areas one used to define her self-image. If a woman defined her self-image by her success in interpersonal relations, and if by acting more assertively she perceived herself as successful in this area, then assertiveness could enhance her self-esteem. If, on the other hand, a woman defined her self-image by her success in child rearing, and if by acting more assertively she perceives herself as less successful in this area, then assertiveness could reduce her self-esteem. With this theoretical framework, it is not the stimulus or the act that is important, but, rather, the symbolic interpretation of the stimulus or the act.

The tests for significance confirmed hypotheses two and three but not hypothesis one. Hypothesis one showed no significant difference in level of assertiveness between the Mormon and the non-Mormon samples. To probe this result further, the samples were broken down into Mormon working mothers, Mormon housewife mothers, non-Mormon working mothers, and non-Mormon housewife mothers to see if the actual role of the mothers corresponded to what the researcher expected their perceived level of assertiveness to be. The results of this showed that the Mormon working mothers were significantly higher at the .05 level in

assertiveness from the Mormon housewife mothers. The non-Mormon working mothers were also higher in assertiveness from the non-Mormon housewife mothers but not significantly so. The least assertive of the four groups was the Mormon housewives. So, although there was no significant difference between the Mormon sample and the non-Mormon sample as to level of assertiveness, there did appear to be a tendency for the working mothers to be more assertive than the housewife mothers.

There was no significant difference between the two samples in level of self-esteem. Looking at the mothers and breaking them down into working mothers and housewife mothers, the results showed no significant difference in level of self-esteem.

In the third hypothesis, the researcher expected a stronger correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem for the non-Mormons than for the Mormons. Even though there was a very strong correlation ( $p < .0001$ ) between the two variables for both samples, the relationship between assertiveness and self-esteem was significantly stronger for the non-Mormon samples at the .05 level.

The rationale behind this present study was that Mormon women would perceive the traditional roles of mother, wife, and homemaker as the areas which defined their self-images; and non-Mormon women having been influenced by the women's movement would perceive the non-traditional roles of employee and co-breadwinner as the areas which define their self-images. Assuming that the ideal self-image of the Mormon women would include a lower level of assertiveness, in the first hypothesis, this researcher expected that Mormon women would perceive themselves as

significantly less assertive than non-Mormon women as measured by the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule.

Since in the symbolic interactionist theoretical framework, self-esteem is defined as the ratio of perceived success over pretensions, it should not matter what role a woman is in, but rather how she values that role, and if she values it, how successfully she perceives herself as filling it. With this rationale, in the second hypothesis, this researcher expected that the Mormon women would score just as high as the non-Mormon women in level of self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Schedule.

Since it was assumed that the Mormon women would perceive assertiveness as being less important to them in the role their church taught was the most important, this researcher, in the third hypothesis, expected a stronger correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem for the non-Mormons than for the Mormons. This, of course, was assuming that the non-Mormon women would have been influenced by the women's movement to perceive assertiveness as being important to them as an attribute of their ideal self.

A review of the research literature produced no similar survey studies examining the variables of assertiveness and self-esteem. A number of studies compared the results of assertiveness training on the level of assertiveness and the level of self-esteem. Some of these found that assertiveness training significantly raised the level of self-esteem in the experimental group (Percell et al., 1974; Osborn and Harris, 1975; Henderson, 1975; Sisson, 1977; Engel and Simons, 1978). Others found that assertiveness training did not raise the level of

self-esteem significantly (Williams, 1976; Pachman and Foy, 1978). One study investigated the antecedents of assertiveness and found that adequate self-esteem is a factor in adequate or high assertiveness (Johnson, 1976). So, from the empirical literature, it appeared that there should be a positive correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem; however, there was no consistent findings that assertiveness training led to a significant increase in self-esteem, or that in all cases there was even a significant correlation between the two variables.

A number of instruments had been developed to measure perceived assertiveness and perceived self-esteem. Of these, this researcher decided to use the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale because they had been well tested upon other samples of adults and they had previously been used in survey research.

Random samples of Mormon and non-Mormon women were gathered from listings in the 1979 Roanoke-Salem-Vinton, Virginia telephone directory. Packets containing questionnaires were mailed to 131 non-Mormon women and 108 Mormon women. Completed questionnaires resulted in even samples of 100 non-Mormon and 100 Mormon women.

These questionnaires included a general information questionnaire containing ten questions to gather demographic information and the two instruments: the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The results were hand scored, tabulated, and analyzed by the computer using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

The results from the demographic questionnaire showed that the two samples were not significantly different except that the Mormon sample had a significantly greater number of children. The mean number of



children for the Mormon sample being 1.62 and the mean number of children for the non-Mormon sample being .70 ( $p < .0001$ ).

### Research Implications

This study demonstrated that specific groups of women can be surveyed for their levels of assertiveness and self-esteem. Although the results are as yet inconclusive, this study does support the findings of Alberti and others that assertiveness and self-esteem are strongly correlated, and that change in the level of assertiveness may lead to a permanent change in the level of self-esteem. If it turns out to be true, that the self-esteem of a person may be increased by increasing their level of assertiveness through assertion training, then church and community leaders may well benefit from surveying the populations over which they have charge to see if their followers have need of assertion training.

Another thing this present study showed is the possibility of a weaker correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem for some populations. There is still the possibility that some groups of women do not define their self-concepts by qualities such as competence and mastery which assertiveness helps to foster, but rather define their self-concepts by the more nurturant aspects of womanhood which are less related to assertive skills. For women such as these, perhaps assertion training would be detrimental to their self-esteem.

### Theoretical Implications

This study lends further support to the theory that assertiveness is significantly related to self-esteem. It would seem that an upward

spiral can result from the positive approval of significant others in which both higher assertiveness and higher positive self-esteem would be manifested. A necessary step in the spiral, of course, must be the subjective view of one's assertiveness being successful to the accomplishment of one's valued goal.

The results of hypothesis three show that the correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem can vary from one population to another. Three possible explanations for this variation are as follows: (1) the significant others within one population may perceive the assertiveness as being not assertive but as aggressive or non-assertive; the result being that the assertiveness is disapproved of by significant others with the possibility of self-esteem decreasing instead of increasing; (2) the significant others within one population may perceive the assertiveness positively, yet the persons performing the assertive behavior may perceive themselves as failing to meet their desired pretensions, hence no upward change in self-esteem results; (3) the persons performing the assertive behavior within one population may perceive their assertive behavior as not important or peripheral to the accomplishment of their central goal. From the viewpoint of the symbolic interactionist, then, assertiveness need not lead to enhanced self-esteem unless it is subjectively perceived as being of value in the attainment of the desired goal.

This study, then, lends support to those who insist that it is not the traditional sex roles of wife and mother which lead to low self-esteem (Birnbaum, 1975; Orlofsky, 1977; Macke, Bohrnstedt, and Bernstein, 1979); but, rather, the arena for achievement which women select

in which to perform (Carlson, 1965; Bardwick, 1971; Stein and Bailey, 1973; Bedeian and Zarra, 1977; and Rosenberg, 1979). A woman does not have low self-esteem because she is a housewife, but because she perceives herself as failing to reach her ideal self because she is a housewife, or, simply, because she perceives herself as failing to reach her goal of being an adequate housewife. If a woman has been socialized to regard the housewife role as an undesirable one, and lacks the assertiveness to obtain another role, her feelings of self-worth will probably suffer. Likewise, if a woman has been socialized to regard the housewife role as desirable, and lacks the assertiveness to be successful as measured by the positive responses of her husband, children, and other significant others, her feelings of self-worth will probably suffer.

The Mormons try diligently to socialize their women to both value the wife-mother role, and to be competent at it. Since the Mormon women showed a high positive correlation between self-esteem and assertiveness ( $p < .0001$ ) perhaps they are socialized to possess some of the behavioral skills that comprise assertiveness. Certainly, the traditional role of wife-mother which the Mormons value does not exclude assertiveness because success in the wife-mother role requires many of the communication skills (Coopersmith, 1967; Satir, 1967; Lederer and Jackson, 1968) and elements of independence, courage, feelings of personal adequacy which lead to assertiveness (Johnson, 1976).

Also, since Johnson (1976) has shown that self-esteem is a predictor of assertiveness, the Mormon women may score assertively because they possess adequate self-esteem. This adequate level of self-esteem

may result from other sources than assertive skills, and, yet, lead to assertive skills which, in turn, as Alberti and Emmons state enhance "feelings of self-worth" and permit "full expression of self (Alberti and Emmons, 1978, p. 12)."

#### Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should examine the variable of religiosity with regard to the Mormon women. The significant difference in level of assertiveness between those Mormon mothers who work outside the home and those Mormon mothers who are housewives might be more meaningful if we knew more about their church commitment.

Also, of interest, would be to explore both the Mormon women and the non-Mormon women to see if the women's movement has changed their values away from the traditional role. Likewise, the current economic conditions are making it more difficult for women to opt for the housewife role. It would be of interest to find out if participation in the workforce itself had an effect on the values of these women. An improved design would be to use both an area of recent Mormon influence (Roanoke, Virginia) as in the present study, and an area of multi-generational Mormon influence, such as Provo, Utah, and compare the two.

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**APPENDIX**

Dear

We in the Department of Management, Housing, and Family Development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University are conducting research on self-esteem in women, and are asking for your assistance. We are not asking for funds. All we are asking is for a few minutes of your time.

As you are aware from the media, we are living in an era when the American woman is facing serious issues concerning her place in society and in the family. You can assist us in evaluating some of the implications of these issues by filling out a questionnaire which we would like permission to send you.

This questionnaire will take no more than fifteen minutes of your time to complete. The questionnaire will have an identification number on it for research purposes. Your response will be kept strictly confidential and never be identified by name. The data will be handled statistically.

You should find the questionnaire to be both easy and interesting to complete. Also, if you should so desire, we can send you information on the results of the study when it is completed.

As an enclosure with this letter, you will find a return post-card on which you may indicate your willingness to cooperate in this research by checking the appropriate box. Thank you for the courtesy of your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

John C. Cosgriff, Jr.  
102 Orchard View Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Dear

Thank you for your willingness to help us in this research. The enclosed questionnaire consists of a total of 50 brief questions. The first ten questions are to help us divide the respondents into groups based on age, marital status, etc.

Please complete all the questions on the four pages according to your present knowledge and attitudes. There are no right or wrong answers so feel free to work quickly.

When you finish, please put the completed questionnaire in the stamped envelope provided, and put it in the mail at your earliest convenience. If you would like to know about the results of this study, please write to me and I will send you a summary of our findings. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

John C. Cosgriff, Jr.  
102 Orchard View Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Dr. James F. Keller  
Thesis Director  
M.H.F.D., Wallace Annex  
V.P.I. & S.U.  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Dear

All of us are busier these days than we would like to be, and most of us have a hard time keeping abreast of all that we would like to accomplish. We know how the little extras are sometimes put aside in spite of our best intentions.

From the questionnaire which reached you -- we hope -- about three weeks ago, we have had no reply. Perhaps it became lost in the mail. In any event, we are enclosing another copy of the questionnaire. We are sure you will try to find fifteen minutes somewhere in your busy schedule to complete it, and drop it in the nearest mailbox. Most of them have been returned. We would like to get them all back. Will you help us?

Thanks. We appreciate your kindness in helping us with this research.

Sincerely,

John C. Cosgriff, Jr.  
102 Orchard View Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Dr. James F. Keller  
Thesis Director  
M.H.F.D., Wallace Annex  
V.P.I. & S.U.  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

## GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

Please answer all of the questions to the best of your knowledge. All answers will be kept completely confidential.

1. What is your present marital status? (Please place an "x" in the appropriate space)

\_\_\_\_\_ single  
 \_\_\_\_\_ married  
 \_\_\_\_\_ separated  
 \_\_\_\_\_ divorced  
 \_\_\_\_\_ widowed

2. What is your race?

\_\_\_\_\_ white  
 \_\_\_\_\_ black  
 \_\_\_\_\_ other

3. What is your current age?

\_\_\_\_\_ 18-29  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 30-39  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 40-49  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 50-59  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 60-69  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 70 and over

4. I have \_\_\_\_\_ children under 18. (Please write the number in the space provided. If the answer is none, please write "0")

5. What is the highest level of education which you have completed? (Please place an "x" in the appropriate space)

\_\_\_\_\_ elementary school  
 \_\_\_\_\_ some high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_ high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_ some college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ some graduate work  
 \_\_\_\_\_ master's degree  
 \_\_\_\_\_ doctorate

6. What is your present religion?

\_\_\_\_\_ Protestant  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Catholic  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Jewish  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other  
 \_\_\_\_\_ None

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

7. What is the approximate income level of your family?

- under \$5,000 per year  
 \$5,000 to \$9,999 per year  
 \$10,000 to \$19,999 per year  
 \$20,000 to \$29,999 per year  
 \$30,000 to \$39,999 per year  
 \$40,000 to \$49,999 per year  
 \$50,000 or more per year

8. Are you presently working for pay outside the home?

- yes, full-time (40 or more hours per week)  
 yes, part-time (39 hours per week or less)  
 no

9. Which of the following best describes your present employment?

- not presently working  
 work under supervision  
 work independently (ex. lawyer, social worker, etc.)  
 supervise others (manager or administrator, etc.)

10. How satisfied are you with your present employment?

- not presently working  
 extremely satisfied  
 very satisfied  
 satisfied  
 not satisfied  
 extremely dissatisfied

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

## QUESTIONNAIRE

---

Directions: Indicate how characteristic or descriptive each of the following statements is of you by using the code given below.

- +3 very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive
- +2 rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive
- +1 somewhat characteristic of me, slightly descriptive
- 1 somewhat uncharacteristic of me, slightly nondescriptive
- 2 rather uncharacteristic of me, quite nondescriptive
- 3 very uncharacteristic of me, extremely nondescriptive

Example: If the following statement is extremely descriptive of you, write "+3" in the space provided.

+3 1a. I like to listen to good music.

---

- 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- 2. At times I think I am no good at all.
- 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- 6. I certainly feel useless at times.
- 7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
- 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- 9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- 11. Most people seem to be more aggressive and assertive than I am.
- 12. I have hesitated to make or accept dates because of "shyness."
- 13. When the food served at a restaurant is not done to my satisfaction, I complain about it to the waiter or waitress.
- 14. I am careful to avoid hurting other people's feelings, even when I feel that I have been injured.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



- \_\_\_15. If a salesman has gone to considerable trouble to show me merchandise which is not quite suitable, I have a difficult time in saying "No."
- \_\_\_16. When I am asked to do something, I insist upon knowing why.
- \_\_\_17. There are times when I look for a good, vigorous argument.
- \_\_\_18. I strive to get ahead as well as most people in my position.
- \_\_\_19. To be honest, people often take advantage of me.
- \_\_\_20. I enjoy starting conversations with new acquaintances and strangers.
- \_\_\_21. I often don't know what to say to attractive persons of the opposite sex.
- \_\_\_22. I will hesitate to make phone calls to business establishments and institutions.
- \_\_\_23. I would rather apply for a job or for admission to a college by writing letters than by going through with personal interviews.
- \_\_\_24. I find it embarrassing to return merchandise.
- \_\_\_25. If a close and respected relative were annoying me, I would smother my feelings rather than express my annoyance.
- \_\_\_26. I have avoided asking questions for fear of sounding stupid.
- \_\_\_27. During an argument I am sometimes afraid that I will get so upset that I will shake all over.
- \_\_\_28. If a famed and respected lecturer makes a statement which I think is incorrect, I will have the audience hear my point of view as well.
- \_\_\_29. I avoid arguing over prices with clerks and salesmen.
- \_\_\_30. When I have done something important or worthwhile, I manage to let others know about it.
- \_\_\_31. I am open and frank about my feelings.
- \_\_\_32. If someone has been spreading false and bad stories about me, I see him (her) as soon as possible to "have a talk" about it.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

- \_\_\_ 33. I often have a hard time saying "No."
- \_\_\_ 34. I tend to bottle up my emotions rather than make a scene.
- \_\_\_ 35. I complain about poor service in a restaurant and elsewhere.
- \_\_\_ 36. When I am given a compliment, I sometimes just don't know what to say.
- \_\_\_ 37. If a couple near me in a theatre or at a lecture were conversing rather loudly, I would ask them to be quiet or take their conversation elsewhere.
- \_\_\_ 38. Anyone attempting to push ahead of me in a line is in for a good battle.
- \_\_\_ 39. I am quick to express an opinion.
- \_\_\_ 40. There are times when I just can't say anything.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

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# SELF-ESTEEM AND ASSERTIVENESS OF ADULT MORMON WOMEN

by

John Cornelius Cosgriff Jr.

(ABSTRACT)

A number of theorists with commitments to the women's movement have stated that the traditional sex-role for women results in low self-esteem. The remedy which they advocate is for women to enter into the male-dominated work force, and by successfully asserting themselves gain power, prestige, wealth, and an increase in self-esteem. Other theorists have stated that assertiveness training can help women to both increase in assertiveness and in self-esteem. Empirical studies, however, have been inconclusive as to whether assertiveness and self-esteem are positively correlated.

The present study examines self-esteem and assertiveness in a sample of Mormon women, a group which advocates the traditional sex-role, to see if their level of assertiveness, their level of self-esteem, and the correlation between the two variables for them would be any different than for the non-Mormon women living in their area. Samples for both groups in the Roanoke, Virginia area were selected and surveyed by mail using the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

The first hypothesis that the Mormon sample would be significantly less assertive than the non-Mormon women was not supported, although for all but the working mothers the Mormons were slightly less assertive. The second hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in self-esteem for the two groups was supported. In

fact, the Mormons scored slightly higher than the non-Mormons in self-esteem. The third hypothesis that the correlation of the means of the two variables would be significantly less for the Mormon sample was supported at the .05 level; however, for both groups the correlation between assertiveness and self-esteem was very high reaching a significance level of .0001.

The results of this study lend support to the theorists and researchers who contend that assertiveness and self-esteem are positively correlated. They also lend support to the Mormons who claim that the traditional sex-role is not detrimental to self-esteem, and that a woman can be successful in that role and have adequate self-esteem without being highly assertive. The finding that there is a very high correlation even for the Mormon women between self-esteem and assertiveness was interpreted to mean that the traditional sex-role too requires a number of the social skills which comprise assertiveness, and that the Mormons may be teaching their women some of these skills when they socialize them to be successful in the traditional role.

The results of this study also lend support to the symbolic interactional theoretical framework that self-esteem comes not from the role in which one chooses to perform or even from the success one has in fulfilling that role, but, rather, from one's perception of the value of the role and one's perception of one's success in fulfilling the role.