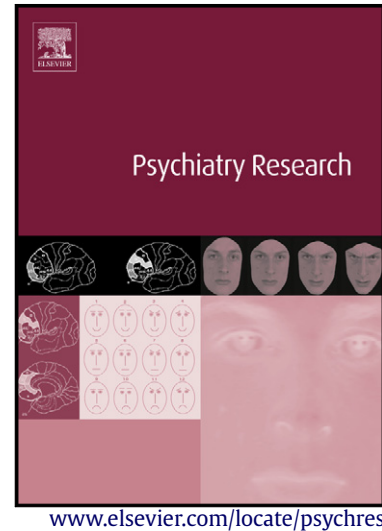


# Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0165-1781(13)00777-4  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2013.12.014>  
Reference: PSY8038

To appear in: *Psychiatry Research*

Received date: 5 June 2013  
Revised date: 7 October 2013  
Accepted date: 4 December 2013

Cite this article as: Daniel Freeman, Nicole Evans, Rachel Lister, Angus Antley, Graham Dunn, Mel Slater, Height, social comparison, and paranoia: An immersive virtual reality experimental study, *Psychiatry Research*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2013.12.014>

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## **Height, social comparison, and paranoia: An immersive virtual reality experimental study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Mistrust of others may build upon perceptions of the self as vulnerable, consistent with an association of paranoia with perceived lower social rank. Height is a marker of social status and authority. Therefore we tested the effect of manipulating height, as a proxy for social rank, on paranoia. Height was manipulated within an immersive virtual reality simulation. Sixty females who reported paranoia experienced a virtual reality train ride twice: at their normal and reduced height. Paranoia and social comparison were assessed. Reducing a person's height resulted in more negative views of the self in comparison with other people and increased levels of paranoia. The increase in paranoia was fully mediated by changes in social comparison. The study provides the first demonstration that reducing height in a social situation increases the occurrence of paranoia. The findings indicate that negative social comparison is a cause of mistrust.

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