

## PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS<sup>1</sup>

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*Summary.*—In the present study, 36 fifth-grade students indicated their perceptions of how men and women are the same and how they are different, following Nemerowicz's 1979 work. Responses were coded into the categories employed by Nemerowicz, who asked these two questions, and into new categories where needed. Subjects' perceptions were compared with those identified by Nemerowicz to see how such perceptions have changed since 1979.

In her 1979 study, "Children's perceptions of gender and work roles," Nemerowicz asked a sample of elementary school students to indicate their perceptions of what gender is and what career roles and activities are appropriate for men and women. Although published in 1979, the Nemerowicz data were collected in 1973 and 1974. As a pilot study in replication of her earlier work, the present research examined children's perceptions of what makes men and women the same and what makes them different by posing these questions to a sample of 36 fifth-grade students from an elementary school in a large city on the west coast. There were 21 boys and 15 girls. While subjects were not asked to provide their ages, all were in the appropriate age range for fifth grade.

The table indicates percentages of responses categorically by sex to each question. For comparative purposes, corresponding percentages from Nemerowicz appear as data at Time 1 and those from the present study at Time 2. Except for categories labeled "new," all are identical to those employed by Nemerowicz.

Total responses at Time 1 and Time 2 were compared in each category using the  $z$  test for proportional differences. As noted in Table 1, significantly fewer subjects at Time 2 cited physical characteristics or work roles as similarities, while a greater number pointed to common humanity or cognitive-affective similarities. For Question 2 significant perceptual differences appear only for new categories. These data suggest that children's over-all perceptions of gender similarities and differences have changed little in the last two decades.

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TABLE 1  
 PERCENTAGES OF RESPONSES BY CATEGORY AND SEX TO TWO QUESTIONS

Category	Boys		Girls	
	Time 1‡	Time 2	Time 1‡	Time 2
How are men and women the same?				
Common humanity*	42	67	47	67
Physical characteristics†	37	14	58	27
Work roles*	20	0	25	13
Family roles/love	8	19	10	13
Household chores	3	0	4	0
Other	7	10	10	20
No similarity	9	0	2	0
Don't know	7	0	7	0
Cognitive/affective (new)†	0	14	0	7
<i>n</i>	182	21	157	15
How are men and women different?				
Physically	81	81	94	86
Job versus home	13	5	10	0
Different paid work	7	0	7	0
Unspecified different jobs	12	14	9	7
Sports	7	0	6	7
Cognitively/affectively (new)†	0	10	0	0
Family/children (new)†	0	3	0	4
<i>n</i>	175	21	153	15

\*z test significant at  $p < .05$ .

†z test significant at  $p < .01$ .

‡Respondents in study of Nemerowicz (1979).

#### REFERENCE

NEMEROWICZ, G. M. (1979) *Children's perceptions of gender and work roles*. New York: Praeger.

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