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## CHILDHOOD SEX DIFFERENCES IN PERSONALITY

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Previous research has examined differences in personality between girls and boys massed throughout the school years. The present research is designed to assess the developmental patterns of personality in terms of sex differences by examining year-by-year changes.

Two questions are asked: (1) What personality variables discriminate most effectively between boys and girls in each grade? and (2) What personality factors best discriminate between the sexes in each grade?

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Subjects were obtained from three public elementary schools located in Connellsville, Pennsylvania. The total number of subjects was 1412: in kindergarten, 43 boys and 67 girls; in first grade, 105 boys and 145 girls; in second grade, 126 boys and 125 girls; in third grade, 101 boys and 104 girls; in fourth grade, 100 boys and 105 girls; in fifth grade, 132 boys and 119 girls; in sixth grade, 76 boys and 64 girls.

#### Procedure

The forty-two bipolar personality traits adapted by Schaie (1966) from Cattell's (1957) normal personality sphere were used to circumscribe the children's personality.

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Teachers rated their pupils on a three point scale, indicating which pole was more applicable of a particular student or indicating the middle indifference point. A stepwise discriminant function analysis was performed for each grade in order to determine which variables significantly discriminated between boys and girls at each age level.

Scores on fifteen personality factors (Cattell's Factors A through O, 1957) were obtained by assigning unit weight on each factor to those traits which significantly loaded on that factor. A stepwise discriminant function analysis determined which factors significantly discriminated between the sexes in each grade.

#### RESULTS

Twenty-five of the 42 variables significantly discriminated between boys and girls in at least one grade throughout the elementary school years. Sex differences were distinguishable as early as kindergarten and were stable in their polar direction; in only one case, "talkative-silent," did the directions reverse themselves. Girls were more talkative in fourth grade, and boys became more talkative in fifth grade.

Girls appeared more obedient in kindergarten, and this trend continued through the elementary years. Similarly, boys were braver, while girls were more complaining, through several grades. In fourth grade, boys became more adventurous, and this dichotomy was preserved in both fifth and sixth grades. These three traits were the most stable throughout the elementary school years.



An analysis of those variables which load upon each factor is useful in explaining the apparently inconsistent manner in which some of the variables are significant in one grade, drop out entirely in the next, and return in another grade. The stepwise discriminant function program adjusts for high correlations with variables previously chosen and selects variables on the basis of that adjustment. Thus, the highly correlated variables will tend to have a lower  $r$  and may vary in their pattern of appearance.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Personality differences appeared stable as a function of sex; the polar directions of each trait rarely changed course. Each grade suggested a slightly different pattern of personality differences--new traits became significant in each successive grade, but the already established discriminant traits remained significant. Approximately half of the 42 variables were significant in at least one grade; thus, sex differences encompass a wide range of personality. Girls were more often ranked on the socially desirable poles of the traits than boys.

The factors gave an even greater indication of the stability of sex differences in personality. "Super-ego strength" and "dominance" discriminated significantly across a majority of the grades. Other factors were significant at different points in time, illustrating focal points of personality differentiation.

In conclusion, sex differences in personality were found to be established as early as kindergarten and further differentiated through the elementary school years. Future research concerning the development of sex differences should consider younger children, since the present research indicates that the process of sex differentiation is well underway at the age of five years.

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Significant Sex Differences in 42 Personality Traits

Traits	Kind. F	First F	Second F	Third F	Fourth F	Fifth F	Sixth F
1. Considerate-Inconsiderate							4.57b
2. Calm-Excitable							
3. Energetic-Tired	4.85g <sup>1</sup>			11.66g*			
4. Quiet-Noisy			4.37g	17.85g*			
5. Patient-Impatient					20.18g*		
6. Cheerful-Solemn			4.37g				
7. Friendly-Reserved	4.16b <sup>1</sup>						
8. Meditative-Unquestioning							
9. Cooperative-Obstructive							
10. Happy-Sad							
11. Sensitive-Tough			26.66g*			17.98g*	
12. Intelligent-Stupid	5.01g						
13. Poised-Flustered							
14. Tolerant-Jealous							
15. Dominant-Submissive							
16. Relaxed-Tense		5.14g					4.63g
17. Conventional-Unconventional							
18. Sociable-Selfcontained							
19. Trustful-Suspicious						4.87b	
20. Selfeffacing-Egotistical							
21. Conscientious-Unscrupulous							
22. Adventurous-Timid					6.38b	8.31b*	4.53b
23. Stable-Unstable					14.17g*		
24. Persevering-Quitting					5.45g		
25. Modest-Attentionseeking		20.77g*			4.33g		
26. Open-Defensive							
27. Refined-Grude							
28. Imaginative-Practical		6.93b*					
29. Obedient-Disobedient	22.73g*			4.93g		4.60g	
30. Adaptable-Inflexible				4.63b			
31. Responsible-Irresponsible							
32. Curious-Incurious				4.95b			
33. Talkative-Silent					4.50g	5.12b	
34. Carefree-Anxious							
35. Tasteful-Inartistic		8.63g*					
36. Resourceful-Baffled							
37. Independent-Dependent							
38. Adult-Naive							9.65g*
39. Orderly-Disorderly	11.81g*			4.44g			
40. Easygoing-Irritable							
41. Expressive-Secretive							
42. Brave-Complaining		8.54b*	4.55b		10.78b*		

<sup>1</sup>g=girls were ranked higher on the socially desirable pole; b=boys were ranked higher.

\*p < .01. In all other cases, p < .05.

df for kindergarten begin at 1/108 for the most significant variable (29), and the denominator loses one df for each successive variable, i.e., 1/107 for variable 39. In first grade the df start at 1/248; second=1/249; third=1/203; fourth=1/203; fifth=1/249; sixth=1/141.

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