

Week 6 Extra Credit
**POPULAR CONCEPTIONS OF GENDER DIFFERENCES
IN NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR: HOW ARE MEN AND
WOMEN DIFFERENT?**

Purpose: This exercise is another replication of Swim's (1994) investigation of people's perceptions of the sizes of gender differences compared with the results of meta-analytic studies.

Instructions: Recruit two men and two women who are willing to complete a short questionnaire that assesses popular conceptions of the gender differences that have been studied by psychologists. Select a variety of participants for this project. Include four people who vary not only by sex but by other social categories (for example, age, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, etc.). Be sure to describe each participant by indicating his or her sex, age, and social attributes (for example, race or ethnicity, social class, etc.) at the top of each interview form.

Explain to your volunteers that the questionnaire contains descriptions of four traits or behaviors. Your participants should read the descriptions and think about whether they believe men and women differ on each attribute. Then, they should provide their estimation of the size of the gender difference using this scale.

- 3: Women are more likely than men to exhibit this trait or behavior. There is a large gender difference favoring women.
- 2: Women are more likely than men to exhibit this trait or behavior. There is a moderate gender difference favoring women.
- 1: Women are more likely than men to exhibit this trait or behavior. There is a small gender difference favoring women.
- 0: No difference. Women and men are equally likely to exhibit this trait or behavior.
- +1: Men are more likely than women to exhibit this trait or behavior. There is a small gender difference favoring men.
- +2: Men are more likely than women to exhibit this trait or behavior. There is a moderate gender difference favoring men.
- +3: Men are more likely than women to exhibit this trait or behavior. There is a large gender difference favoring men.

Participant A

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following behaviors or traits. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

1. *Nonverbal Decoding*: This involves the ability to read or interpret the emotional expressions of others. Who is better at interpreting nonverbal cues? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

2. *Maintaining Eye Contact*: When two or more people are engaged in a conversation, who is most likely to gaze intently? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Agitation and Restless Behavior*: Who is more likely to fidget, change position, and act restless in a conversation? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Communication of Encouragement and Involvement*: Who is more likely to communicate encouragement and involvement through gestures such as a forward lean, nodding, etc.? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Participant B

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following behaviors or traits. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

1. *Nonverbal Decoding*: This involves the ability to read or interpret the emotional expressions of others. Who is better at interpreting nonverbal cues? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

2. *Maintaining Eye Contact*: When two or more people are engaged in a conversation, who is most likely to gaze intently? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Agitation and Restless Behavior*: Who is more likely to fidget, change position, and act restless in a conversation? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Communication of Encouragement and Involvement*: Who is more likely to communicate encouragement and involvement through gestures such as a forward lean, nodding, etc.? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Participant C

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following behaviors or traits. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

1. *Nonverbal Decoding*: This involves the ability to read or interpret the emotional expressions of others. Who is better at interpreting nonverbal cues? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

2. *Maintaining Eye Contact*: When two or more people are engaged in a conversation, who is most likely to gaze intently? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Agitation and Restless Behavior*: Who is more likely to fidget, change position, and act restless in a conversation? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Communication of Encouragement and Involvement*: Who is more likely to communicate encouragement and involvement through gestures such as a forward lean, nodding, etc.? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Participant D

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following behaviors or traits. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

1. *Nonverbal Decoding*: This involves the ability to read or interpret the emotional expressions of others. Who is better at interpreting nonverbal cues? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

2. *Maintaining Eye Contact*: When two or more people are engaged in a conversation, who is most likely to gaze intently? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Agitation and Restless Behavior*: Who is more likely to fidget, change position, and act restless in a conversation? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Communication of Encouragement and Involvement*: Who is more likely to communicate encouragement and involvement through gestures such as a forward lean, nodding, etc.? Women or men?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Summarize your results by answering the questions below.

1. Swim found that her college-student samples generally provided accurate estimations or underestimated gender differences. What were your findings?
2. Swim suggested that the high level of accuracy exhibited in her sample might be due to the fact that it was composed of college students (aged 18 to 22) who might be likely to underestimate gender differences. Comment on this possibility, especially if your participants were not traditional college students.
3. What is the effect on others if people underestimate the impact of gender differences? If people downplay the role of gender in social behavior, what are the implications for men and women in social interaction?

Adapted from Hyde, Janet Shibley. *Half the human experience: The psychology of women* (5th ed.). Copyright © 1996 by D. C. Heath and Company. Used with permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

Reference: Swim, Janet K. (1994). Perceived versus meta-analytic effect sizes: An assessment of the accuracy of gender stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 21-36.