

Sex Differences In Behavior: A Conference

1

Gender Differences in Colour Naming

1. Introduction: Gender Differences in Colour Vocabulary and Colour Relating Performance

The importance of richness and variety of colour experience cannot be underestimated. Colour has an affective value and, in everyday life, is used to code, match and identify objects as well as to communicate.

It is well known that the gender of the subject affects colour naming behaviour. Previous studies have shown that: (a) girls name colours better than boys at each age in early childhood (Anyan and Quillian, 1971); and (b) women tend to use more elaborate vocabularies than men (Rich, 1977; Swaringen et al, 1978; Nowaczyk, 1982). In addition, men tend to use more modifiers, more compound terms and fewer elaborate names than women. In a large study of colour naming in English and Chinese, Lin et al (2001) found that female subjects used more names than male subjects in both cultures. Advertisers take advantage of this in their choice of colour terms used in catalogues, with more variation in the terms for women's clothing than for men's (Frank, 1990). In a study of colour harmony it was found that blue, pink, purple (against all backgrounds) were perceived by the average female observer as being less harmonious than by the average male observer, but the reverse for brown (Gurura and MacDonald, 2005).

Numerous studies have demonstrated gender differences in colour naming, with women invariably shown to possess a more extensive colour

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